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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Pak opens 6 land routes to Iran amid Hormuz blockade

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Pakistan has opened six overland routes to Iran, creating a crucial workaround to US President Donald Trump's blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. The blockade, paired with attacks and seizures of vessels linked to Iranian ports, has significantly disrupted Iran's trade flows, depriving the country of critical supplies and access to global markets. The overland routes facilitate the movement of goods into Iran, creating an alternative trade corridor for over 3,000 Iran-bound containers stranded at Pakistani ports, particularly Karachi. The overland workaround follows a statutory regulatory order issued by Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, which provides a legal framework for transporting third-country goods into Iran through Pakistani territory under an encashable customs guarantee. —*AGENCIES*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah visited the spot where a compound wall collapsed and seven people died near Bowring Hospital due to heavy rain in Bengaluru on Wednesday; He also met the victims' families —*MOHAMMED ASAD/PTI*

7 dead in B'luru wall collapse after rains

CM pulls up officials after incident at Bowring

BENGALURU, 29 APRIL

Seven people, including two children, were killed and seven others injured when the compound wall of the City's Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital collapsed due to heavy rains here on Wednesday, police said.

When heavy rains, coupled with strong winds and a hailstorm, battered the area, victims taking shelter near a wall were trapped when it suddenly collapsed, killing seven people on the spot.

Police and emergency services personnel rushed to the spot with an earthmover to bring out the bodies and the injured with the help of citizens.

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah visited the spot with the Greater Bengaluru Authority Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao and Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh. Siddaramaiah took the GBA officials to task for the tragedy. He told reporters, "Seven people have died. Out of them, two are children. Seven people are injured. All of them are stable… I have told the doctors to provide treatment free of cost."

"Rs 5 lakh solatium will be given to the kin of each deceased. Because, unfortunately, those who died are very poor people — traders, street vendors," he added.

Siddaramaiah said an inquiry will be conducted to see if the engineers are at fault. Action will be taken immediately, he said. He added that there was civil work going on inside the compound wall. The contractor was dumping soil against the compound wall, the pressure of which might have caused the collapsed. No one knew there would be heavy and untimely rains, the CM said, adding that these were pre-monsoon rains.

Another death was reported in Vega City Mall, however, no details were available at time of publishing. —*PTI*

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Dabholkar murder: HC grants bail to convict Kalaskar

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted bail to **Sharad Kalaskar** — convicted in the 2013 murder of rationalist activist Narendra Dabholkar — suspending his life sentence while. The court raised doubts about the statements of two witnesses, whom the prosecution had identified as eyewitnesses.

The court directed Kalaskar to deposit a bond of Rs 50,000 and appear once a month before Pune's Deccan Police, where the murder case was registered. It noted that Kalaskar has been in jail since 2018, and the likelihood of the HC taking up his appeal against conviction in the near future was remote.

Kalaskar challenged his conviction before the HC in 2024, seeking bail pending the hearing of his appeal. Kalaskar is also facing trial for the killing of communist leader Govind Pansare, for which he was granted bail by the HC last October.

Dabholkar, the founder of the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti, was shot dead by two motorcycle-borne assailants in Pune on 20 August 2013. His murder was the first in a chain of killings of three rationalist activists: Govind Pansare in Kolhapur in February 2015, MM Kalburgi in Dharwad in August 2015, and journalist Gauri Lankesh in Bengaluru in September 2017. — *PTI*

'Parl, not courts must decide on hate speech'

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Supreme Court on Wednesday declined to issue additional directions to curb hate speech across India, holding that existing laws are sufficient and that the issue lies in enforcement, not legislation and left it to Parliament to decide if any changes are necessary.

The bench, comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, emphasised that "the creation of criminal offences and the prescription of punishments lies squarely within the legislative domain" and that the constitutional separation of powers prevents the judiciary from creating new offences or expanding criminal liability through judicial directions.

"There is no legislative vacuum in tackling hate speeches warranting intervention," the court stated. It noted that the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) already provides a comprehensive framework to initiate criminal proceedings against those involved in hate speech.

"The contention that the field of hate speech remains legislatively unoccupied is misconceived," the bench added. The verdict came on a batch of petitions seeking action against individuals engaging in hate speech and the creation of mechanisms to address such incidents. It observed that the Centre and competent legislative authorities remain free to consider further legislative or policy measures, including possible amendments suggested by the Law Commission's 267th report of March 2017, to address evolving societal challenges. —*PTI*

EVERYONE WILL WELCOME KHARGE AS K'TAKA CM: HM

BENGALURU, 29 APRIL

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said everyone in the ruling Congress party would welcome AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge as the Chief Minister of the State, if the latter desired the post.

The statement comes amid a resurgence of speculation about a possible change in the leadership and a cabinet reshuffle after 4 May, when the Davangere South and Bagalkot bypoll results are announced.

"If he (Kharge) becomes (the CM) we will be very happy, because he is a senior politician with a lot of experience. If he becomes CM, we will all welcome it," Parameshwara told reporters.

Parameshwara declined to answer whether Kharge was postponing a decision on the leadership row because he wanted a Dalit to become the Chief Minister.

He added that Congress High Command will decide on the issue when they had to, and the party was "fortunate to have Kharge, who is from the State, as the AICC President".

The alleged power tussle is largely seen as an internal fight between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar, with some supporters also demanding that Parameshwara, who is also from the Dalit, be made the CM. Kharge, on the other hand, is a towering figure the State, but has since turned to national politics. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 2*

ARREST IN DRUG CASE

Student kills himself over police harassment in Dharwad

DHARWAD, 30 APRIL

A 20-year-old student, Aditya Maggeri, died by suicide at his residence in Girinagar on Monday night. Allegations have surfaced that police harassment and a demand for bribe pushed Maggeri to take the extreme step.

According to information received by Salar News, Aditya a second-semester BSc student of a private college in Dharwad was among 18 youths who were arrested by the Vidyagiri Police for smoking ganja. After

Maggeri's tests came out negative, he was released by the police. However, it is alleged that some of the cops continued to harass Maggeri and asked him for a bribe of Rs 2,000 failing which he was warned that he would be implicated in the case. Unable to pay the bribe, Maggeri is said to have hanged himself to death.

Dharwad ACP Prashanth Siddanagoudar, told Salar News that a committee led by DCP had been formed to investigate the matter, and action would be taken based on the report. Police Commissioner N. Shashikumar issued orders suspending the three police personnel from Vidyagiri Police Station involved in the case. —*Salar News*

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'BJP may win WB, Assam; UDF in Ker, DMK in TN'

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Exit polls on Wednesday projected a strong showing for the BJP in Assam and an edge over the ruling TMC in West Bengal, while forecasting a return to power for the DMK in Tamil Nadu and a Congress-led UDF comeback in Kerala after a decade. Puducherry was widely expected to see the AINRC-led NDA return.

In West Bengal, most pollsters predicted a BJP victory, though People's Pulse and Janmat favoured a big win for Mamata Banerjee's TMC. Poll Diary forecast 142-171 seats for the BJP, 99-127 for the TMC and 3-5 for Congress. Praja Poll projected 178-208 for the BJP and 85-110 for the TMC. The 294-seat assembly requires 148 for a majority.

Tamil Nadu exit polls largely favoured the DMK, though two surveys indicated a hung assembly. Praja Poll predicted 148-168 seats for DMK plus, 61-81 for AIADMK, and 1-9 for Vijay's TVK. Peoples Insight forecast 120-140 for DMK plus, 60-70 for AIADMK, and 30-40 for TVK. JVC was the only pollster predicting an AIADMK win, 128-147 seats, with 75-95 for DMK plus and 18-15 for TVK. Tamil Nadu has 234 seats; 118 is the majority mark.

Assam exit polls suggested a sweep for the BJP-led NDA. Axis My India projected 88-100 seats for the NDA and 24-36 for Congress allies. Other pollsters forecast similar ranges, with the 126-seat assembly requiring 64 to form a government.

Kerala exit polls predicted a UDF return. Axis My India expected 78-90 seats for UDF, 49-62 for LDF, and 0-3 for NDA. Other surveys gave UDF a narrow to comfortable edge over LDF in the 140-seat assembly, with 71 required for a majority.

In Puducherry, the AINRC-led NDA was projected to secure 16-25 seats, with Congress or DMK allies taking 4-12 and TVK 1-4 in the 30-seat assembly.

Exit polls have a mixed record, and results may differ when counting begins on 4 May 4 for all five assemblies. Some surveys, including Axis My India for West Bengal, will release results on Thursday. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

TAMIL NADU

SEATS: 234 | MAJORITY MARK: 117

PARTIES	DMK	AIADMK	TVK	OTH
AXIS MY INDIA	92-110	22-32	98-120	0
P-MARQ	125-145	65-85	16-26	1-6
MATRIZE	122-132	87-110	10-12	0-6
PEOPLES PULSE	125-145	65-80	18-24	1-6

KERALAM

SEATS: 140 | MAJORITY MARK: 71

PARTIES	LDF	UDF	BJP	OTH
AXIS MY INDIA	49-62	78-90	0-3	0
P-MARQ	62-69	71-79	1-4	0-3
MATRIZE	60-65	70-75	3-5	2-4
PEOPLES PULSE	55-65	75-85	0-3	0

WEST BENGAL

SEATS: 294 | MAJORITY MARK: 148

PARTIES	TMC	BJP	CONG	LEFT
POLL DIARY	99-127	142-171	3-5	2-3
P-MARQ	118-138	150-175	0	0
MATRIZE	125-140	146-161	0	0
PEOPLES PULSE	177-187	95-110	1-3	0-1

ASSAM

SEATS: 126 | MAJORITY MARK: 64

PARTIES	BJP	CONG	OTH
AXIS MY INDIA	88-100	24-36	0-3
P-MARQ	82-94	30-40	0-5
MATRIZE	85-95	25-32	6-12
PEOPLES PULSE	68-72	22-26	19-28

PUDUCHERRY

SEATS: 30 | MAJORITY MARK: 16

PARTIES	NDA	SPA	TVK	OTH
AXIS MY INDIA	16-20	6-8	2-4	1-3
NDTV	16-20	6-8	2-4	0
PRAJA POLL	19-25	6-10	0-0	0
PEOPLES PULSE	16-19	10-12	0	1-2

Phase 2 polls in WB marred by violence amid record turnout

KOLKATA, 29 APRIL

The second and final phase recorded 91.66 per cent turnout by 7.45 pm, with queues still remaining, taking the combined turnout across both phases to 92.47 per cent — the highest since Independence. The first phase on 23 April had seen 93.19 per cent participation.

Polling day was marked by repeated flashpoints. Clashes in Kalighat during a political visit led to a police lathi-charge as rival supporters raised slogans. In several areas of Falta, voting was disrupted after BJP alleged that its button on electronic voting machines (EVMs) had been taped over, prompting demands for repolls.

Officials said repolling may be ordered in booths where EVM tampering is confirmed.

TMC accused central forces of using excessive force on voters in Falta's Belsingha village, Howrah's Sathachhia and parts of Ausgram, alleging that women, children and elderly persons were assaulted while being dispersed from polling stations. The party also claimed that an elderly voter died in Howrah's Udaynarayanpur after being pushed by security personnel.

Further violence was reported in Nadia, where a BJP polling agent was allegedly attacked by a group of armed miscreants and beaten with rods, while a party office was vandalised. In South 24 Parganas, tensions rose after an ISF agent was reportedly prevented from entering a polling booth.

In Howrah's Bali constituency, an EVM malfunction triggered chaos among voters, requiring central forces to intervene; two people were arrested before polling resumed.

The elections were also shaped by a revision of electoral rolls that removed over 90 lakh names. Counting will take place on 4 May. —*PTI*

People wait in queues amid rain before casting their votes in Howrah, on Wednesday —*PTI*

Rains flood Vidhana Soudha, LoP's office

City roads turn into rivers again in 2 hours, as storms bring destruction and respite

Rains suddenly lashed the City on Wednesday, bringing respite from the summer heat, but also flooding the streets and distressing commuters. A tree fell near Sri Ramakrishna Ashram in Basavanagudi, injuring two *MOHAMMED ASAD*

Hail stones decorated the City on Wednesday *MOHAMMED ASAD*

BENGALURU, 29 APRIL

Heavy rains coupled with a hailstorm lashed the City on Wednesday, crippling normal life. The City recorded 78mm rainfall in just 30 minutes. With the rains, the City, from being parched, witnessed waterlogging in just two hours. Unexpected rain caused waterlogging in the corridors and inside government offices of Vidhana Soudha, the seat of power. The office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka was also flooded.

There was waist-deep water in many areas in the City, such as Richmond Town and Shanthinagar. The City also witnessed widespread traffic chaos for long hours in multiple locations.

Since the downpour occurred in the evening, many office goers struggled to return home. There were also reports of some disruptions in Metro services.

Vehicular movement across key arterial roads and junctions was affected, with vehicles moving at a snail's pace. Several low-lying areas were inundated.

Uprooting of trees was reported in many parts of the City, including Malleswaram, Shanthinagar and Seshadripuram.

According to the Greater Bengaluru Authority command and control centre, in 50 places trees have fallen in the city. The affected areas included RT Nagar, Vijayanagar, Seshadripuram, Jayanagar, Wilson Garden and Cubbon Park.

Fire and Emergency Services personnel, along with traffic police and GBA staff, were deployed at multiple locations to clear stalled vehicles and uprooted trees, and to regulate traffic movement. Pumps were used to clear inundated roads, officials said.

The City's much loved bookstore, The Bookworm, posted on Instagram that their store was flooded on Wednesday. "Due to heavy rain in Bangalore we lost 4000 to 5000 books," they posted.

The rains brought much relief to people battered by the summer, where the temperature soared to 37 degrees Celsius. *—PTI*

ASHOKA CALLS WALL COLLAPSE 'STATE SPONSORED DISASTER'

>>>Continued from Page 1

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, R Ashoka, lashed out at the government over the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital wall collapse that killed seven. He called the incident "a state-sponsored disaster born out of sheer administrative negligence".

"How many more lives must be sacrificed at the altar of poor infrastructure and civic apathy? While the Congress government indulges in tall claims of 'Brand Bengaluru,' the crumbling walls of a premier government hospital in the heart of the city tell a different, more lethal story," he posted on X.

Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru in charge Minister, DK Shivakumar, who was in Kanakapura, rushed to the spot. "Such things should not have happened. Many trees have fallen, and vehicles were damaged. I will direct officials to cut the weak trees because there was a risk of such tragedies happening again during the monsoon," he told reporters. *—Agencies*

Kuvempu varsity students protest over scholarship funds, poor hostel facilities

SHIVAMOGGA, 29 APRIL

Students under the National Students Union of India (NSUI) staged a protest at Kuvempu University in Shivamogga on Wednesday, demanding the release of scholarship funds and upgrades to hostel facilities.

The demonstration escalated into a rampage as protestors destroyed the flower pots, furniture outside the Vice Chancellor's (VC) chamber and blackened the nameplates. VC Sharath Ananthamurthy tried to pacify the students.

The members of the student wing of Congress took to the university corridors, raising slogans such as "DOWN DOWN VC".

Speaking to reporters, Ananthamurthy said the students had approached him four days ago and submitted a memorandum.

"During the discussion, we solved some of their grievances, but what they did today by damaging university property is unacceptable. We don't even know if those who staged the protests are students," the VC said.

He warned that action would be taken against those involved in the vandalism. *—PTI*

C'ballapur ryots clash with cops over land

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 29 APRIL

A major clash broke out between the farmers and police in front of the District Administration Office in Chikkaballapur district.

Two farmers were hurt in the incident, with one sustaining serious injuries and currently undergoing treatment at a hospital.

The farmers were on an indefinite protest against the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) land acquisition process in Jangamakote Hobli of Chikkaballapur district's Shidlaghatta taluk, which turned tense on Wednesday.

They were allegedly unhappy that the District Minister MC Sudhakar had not visited the farmers despite over a month of protests and attempted to breach a police barricade.

Police attempted to control the protest, leading to allegations of manhandling and physical assault. It is also reported that some farmers were allegedly dragged by their collars during the incident.

Farmers opposing the land acquisition expressed fears of losing their livelihood.

Kumar, one of the protestors, alleged, "We have repeatedly requested the district minister and MLA to visit the spot and accept our memorandum, but they have not responded. Today, more than 500 police personnel were deployed, and a lathi charge was carried out."

Farmers expressed strong dissatisfaction against the district administration, alleging that authorities are ignoring genuine farmers while extending support to "fake farmers," and failing to understand the ground realities.

The "fake farmers" was likely a reference to farmers who have given their land to

Farmers allegedly attempted to breach a police barricade *SCREENGRAB*

SC allows Mega Agri Market at Magadi Road

BENGALURU, 29 APRIL

The Supreme Court has cleared the way for the establishment of a Mega Agriculture Market in Bengaluru, ending a legal dispute that had stalled the project for more than two decades.

The ambitious project, proposed by the Bangalore Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), will come up on 272.33 acres of land on Magadi Main Road in Bengaluru North Taluk.

The land includes 172 acres in Srigandhakaval village and 100 acres in Herohalli village, which previously belonged to the Jamnalal Bajaj Seva Trust.

The project had faced legal challenges since 1999, when the Jamnalal Bajaj Seva Trust questioned the land acquisition in the Karnataka High Court, which ruled that the acquisition had lapsed under provisions of the 2013 Land Acquisition Act. Several appeals by the APMC failed to convice the High Court otherwise.

Bringing the long legal battle to a close, a Supreme Court Bench comprising Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan dismissed the Trust's Special Leave Petition on 27 April.

The proposed market is expected to offer modern, world-class facilities for farmers, traders, labourers and consumers.*—Salar News*

KIADB Asst Commissioner caught taking Rs 15 lakh bribe

An Assistant Commissioner dealing with land acquisition for the KIADB was caught red-handed while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 15 lakh to clear a pending revenue matter, Lokayukta officials said on Wednesday. According to Lokayukta officials, the complainant, Ravi Kumar, 41, resident of Attur in Yelahanka, had approached the Lokayukta

alleging that the officer demanded Rs 30 lakh to pass a favourable order in a Rapid Revenue Team (RRT) case pending before the Assistant Commissioner (North) office in Bengaluru. Officials said Nagaprashanth, a Karnataka Administrative Services (KAS) officer, was serving as Special Assistant Commissioner (North) and Special Land Acquisition Officer-1 at the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) in Bengaluru. Nagaprasath and his outsourced driver, Kumar, were secured following the trap.

CHAMARAJANAGAR WEDDING TURNS VIOLENT OVER GOLD JEWELLERY

MYSURU, 29 APRIL

A wedding celebration filled with music and dance turned into a crime scene after few youths attacked a relative of the groom with a knife on the stage over a row about jewellery, in Chamarajanagar district on Wednesday.

The wedding function of Muddassir from Kollegal and Gulanaz Banu from Tamil Nadu was underway at RS Function Hall in Kollegal town when the incident took place, police stated.

A heated argument allegedly began when the groom's family members came 1.5 hours late to the reception on Tuesday night.

This escalated because the groom's family members promised to bring 100 grams of gold jewellers to the bride, but they had arrived with 30 grams of gold grams to the wedding hall.

When one of the relatives of groom, Mohammed Kaisar, tried to talk with the family members of the bride and resolve the dispute on Wednesday morning, the family members belonging to groom attacked him with a knife after rushing towards the stage. The attackers were allegedly Firoz Khan, Abdul Waheed and Abdul Arif

Family members of both parties were injured during the incident. Kollegal Town Police who rushed to the spot, registered a case between both parties. Investigation is underway.

Following the dispute, the groom family members cancelled the wedding. *—Salar News*

3 killed, several injured as bus hits tanker in Udupi

UDUPI, 29 APRIL

Three people were killed and several others injured on Wednesday when a tourist bus allegedly rammed into a stationary tanker on a national highway in this district, police said.

The accident occurred near Trasi Beach in Byndoor taluk, they said.

Many of the injured were reportedly B.Com students from a college in Shivamogga district on a coastal tour, and the bus was carrying around 47 people. The accident occurred when the bus, travelling from Murudeshwar towards Udupi, collided with the tanker parked by the roadside.The injured have been shifted to a private hospital in Kundapur. Police have visited the spot, and further investigation is underway, the Byndoor traffic police said. *—PTI*

Namma Yatri starts pickup at KIA, Rapido in talks

BENGALURU, 29 APRIL

Namma Yatri has started a cab pickup area at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), reported Moneycontrol. Sources said Namma Yatri opened booking counters at both terminals on Monday Meanwhile, Rapido is talking with Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) to set up similar counters at the airport. In December 2025, BIAL implemented new pick-up rules stating that only those authorised by the airport operator can pick up passengers from the kerbside. Authorised taxi operators have been provided with dedicated pick-up bays at the terminals. However, BIAL-authorised cab operators pay annual charges for access to these parking bays. *—SALAR NEWS*

Woman jumps into well with her 2 daughters

MULBAGAL, 29 APRIL

A woman committed suicide along with her two daughters by jumping into a well at C Koravenuru village in Mulbagal taluk, reportedly following prolonged domestic issues. The deceased are Lakshmidevamma, 38, and her daughters Gaganashri, 14, and Reddemma, 9. Lakshmidevamma reportedly tied her two children to the saree she was wearing before jumping. It is alleged that her husband, Narayannappa was a habitual drinker and had neglected the family responsibilities. Mulbagal Rural Police Station personnel recovered the bodies and handed them over to family members after an autopsy. Narayannappa has been taken in for questioning.

-Salar News

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

—INSTAGRAM

Yash's 'Toxic' release postponed for global rollout

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Yash-starrer 'Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups' will no longer release on 6 June, the makers said on Wednesday, as they are realigning their strategy to ensure a wider global rollout. The decision followed the film's presentation at CinemaCon, where it received a strong response from international distributors and industry stakeholders. 'Toxic' was originally scheduled to release on 19 March, but was postponed to 4 June due to the West Asia conflict, with the Gulf region being a key overseas market for the film. Yash said that at a time when Indian cinema was stepping onto the global stage, he felt a responsibility "to raise the bar" and give the film the impact it deserves. *—PTI*

1ST IN THE COUNTRY

112 helpline is now multilingual with AI

BENGALURU, 29 APRIL

The Bengaluru city police on Wednesday announced the launch of an advanced multilingual AI capability integrated into its 112 Emergency Response Support System.

The multilingual system supports Bengali, Gujarati, Odia, Manipuri, along with widely spoken international languages like Spanish, French and Arabic, police said.

Launched by Home Minister G Parameshwara, the system is being claimed as a first-of-its-kind emergency response initiative in India.

In critical moments language differences can become a barrier to accessing emergency assistance, police said.

Home Minister G Parameshwar meets police personnel at the City Police Commissioner office during the launch the 112 Emergency Services, on Wednesday *Mohammed Asad*

"Recognising this challenge, Namma 112 has now been enhanced with Multilingual Voice AI for Nationwide Key Interventions (VANKI), a pioneering solution designed to ensure that language is never an obstacle during emergencies," the Bengaluru Police said in a statement.

Officials said that through this innovative system, callers can communicate in their preferred language, enabling real-time understanding.

"The technology assists call handlers by instantly interpreting and relaying critical information, ensuring faster response times, improved clarity, and accurate deployment of emergency services. This transformative initiative has been developed in collaboration with Monday Ventures and Aeos," it said.

The platform will continue to expand its language capabilities in a phased manner, they said. *— PTI*

16 arrested, drugs worth over Rs 36 cr seized in City

BENGALURU, 29 APRIL

Mohammed Asad

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday said the Bengaluru City Police have seized drugs worth over Rs 36 crore and arrested of 16 people in recent operations.

This includes four foreign nationals, eight people from other states and four people local residents, police said.

Parameshwara said at a presser that the objective is to curb narcotic substances at three levels -- supply, production and consumption – to ensure the State becomes drug free.

According to a Bengaluru police statement, this year, drugs worth over Rs 130 crore have been seized and 1,959 cases, including 256 on peddlers and 1,703 on consumers have been registered. So far, a total of 2,591 Indian nationals and 21 foreigners have been arrested under the NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act, it said.

In addition, Parameshwara said 401 foreign nationals were deported in 2025, while 427 people have been deported so far in 2026, including 286 Bangladesh nationals. This includes people who were overstaying their visas. *—PTI*

43 Hmar insurgents to surrender in Mizoram

AIZAWL, 29 APRIL

A total of 43 members of the Lalhmingthanga Sanate-led faction of the HPC(D) will lay down arms in Mizoram on Thursday, officials said on Wednesday. Chief Minister Lalduhoma and Home Minister K Sapdanga will attend the event at the Police Central Training Institute in Sesawng near Aizawl. The "homecoming ceremony" marks the end of insurgency in Mizoram following the 14 April peace accord between the state government and the Hmar People's Convention (Democratic). The agreement promises development for the Hmar-majority SHC region, including increased funding, infrastructure upgrades, and better connectivity. Though largely dormant recently, the faction was considered the last ethnic insurgent outfit in Mizoram. *—PTI*

Slain leader's wife loses M'rashtra sarpanch bypoll

BEED, 29 APRIL

Ashwini Deshmukh, wife of slain sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh,has been defeated in the byelection for the sarpanch post at Massajog village in Maharashtra's Beed district on Wednesday. Ashwini had contested the election banking on a sympathy wave. The bypoll was necessitated following the murder of Santosh on 9 December 2024. Counting of votes was taken up on Wednesday morning at the Kaij tehsil office. Swarupanand Deshmukh defeated Ashwini by a margin of 92 votes. Santosh was murdered in 2024 after he tried to stop an attempt to extort money from a wind power firm. Walmik Karad, a close aide of then minister Dhananjay Munde, was arrested in the case, leading to Munde's resignation from the Cabinet. *—PTI*

BJP slams Congress over 'assault' on J'khand scribe

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

A political row erupted in Jharkhand on Wednesday after a journalist was assaulted by supporters of state Minister Irfan Ansari, with the BJP attacking the Congress and seeking action. Ansari is a senior Congress leader who represents the Jamtara assembly constituency. According to reports, a journalist was allegedly assaulted by Ansari's supporters for asking "pointed questions" during on Tuesday, prompting opposition leaders to demand action from the Soren-led government. BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla asked whether Congress leader Rahul Gandhi or Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren would take action against Ansari. *—PTI*

Mamata, Suvendu land at same booth

Suvendu says CM will lose by 30,000 votes; Mamata claims TMC leaders were attacked

KOLKATA, 29 APRIL

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari were present in the same polling booth area in Bhabanipur's Chakraberia on Wednesday, exchanging sharp remarks without meeting directly, underscoring the high-stakes battle in the Chief Minister's political stronghold.

Though they did not come face-to-face, both leaders were briefly in ward 70. Banerjee was seated outside a local TMC office after complaints of alleged intimidation of party workers, while Adhikari arrived on the road opposite with central forces and launched a direct attack, claiming the Chief Minister "knew she was not getting a single vote".

Adhikari alleged Banerjee was moving with "50–60 goons" despite restrictions and said she was "scared" as state police had been replaced by central forces. "If she has any problem, she should approach the Election Commission. Why 40–50 people with her?" he said, adding that Union Home Minister Amit Shah had called him. He said he would win Bhabanipur by over 30,000 votes.

Banerjee, who broke her usual routine by stepping out before 8am, accused the BJP of attempting to "rig" the election using central forces, observers and officials. She alleged that TMC workers were being targeted and detained, including her party's youth president, and said, "We stayed awake all night. Our workers are ready to die, but democracy will not be allowed to be murdered."

She claimed central forces were acting on BJP directions and said outsiders were being brought into the constituency. Banerjee also alleged intimidation in Chakraberia and Chetla, including visits by forces to party workers' homes and harassment of women.

She further cited unrest in Bhangar and accused the Election Commission of bias, showing videos of alleged incidents. The BJP rejected her charges, saying she was creating confusion after sensing electoral defeat. *—PTI*

BJP candidate for Bhabanipur and Nandigram constituencies, Suvendu Adhikari, visits a polling station in his constituency during the second and final phase of the state Assembly elections, in Kolkata *—PTI*

Derek dares PM to quit if TMC wins

TMC's Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien on Wednesday expressed confidence that his party will come back to power in the state after the assembly elections and challenged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to resign when the results come.

In a video shared on microblogging site X, O'Brien accused the prime minister of making exaggerated political claims and urged him to "accept the challenge" instead of indulging in "big talk."

"Narendra, you had announced that you are the candidate on all 294 seats in West Bengal. Leave out the big talk and accept this challenge..." O'Brien wrote.

He asserted that if the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC wins the state, the prime minister should step down from his post. "When Mamata Banerjee and TMC win West Bengal, you will resign from your post as the prime minister," he said.

RG Kar rape-murder victim's mother faces TMC protests

KOLKATA, 29 APRIL

BJP's Panihati candidate Ratna Debnath, mother of the RG Kar rape-murder victim, faced protests by Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers during polling in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday, even as she accused them of intimidation and preventing her from leaving a booth.

Debnath alleged that after she requested help for an elderly woman to cast her vote, TMC activists accused her of influencing voters and blocked her exit. "An Election Commission official said a report has been sought on the incident.

A local TMC leader, however, dismissed the allegations, claiming Debnath was trying to influence voters and "staging a drama".

At another booth in Sodepur, Debnath alleged that black ink had been applied on an EVM in a way that made the BJP symbol less visible, and claimed the voting machine's beep was not heard after pressing the button. *—PTI*

RG Kar rape-murder victim's mother and BJP's Panihati candidate Ratna Debnath *—PTI*

CELEBS GET INKED

Sourav Ganguly and wife Dona after voting in South 24 Parganas, Actor and BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty *—PTI*

PIL in SC claims misconduct by 'Singham' cop

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Supreme Court challenging the Election Commission's appointment of Uttar Pradesh cadre IPS officer Ajay Pal Sharma as Election Observer for the West Bengal Assembly polls, alleging bias.

The petition, filed by Aditya Das, claims Sharma is "highly partisan" and has been seen threatening TMC candidates, arguing this violates Section 20B of Representation of the People Act, 1951, which defines observers as neutral officials. Controversy intensified after BJP's West Bengal unit posted about Sharma's deployment in South 24 Parganas, calling him an "encounter specialist" and sharing claims he warned TMC candidate Jehangir Ali's family.

The Trinamool Congress has opposed his appointment, while the Calcutta High Court earlier declined to intervene.

BJP candidate alleges assault inside polling booth

BJP candidates in West Bengal alleged violence and irregularities as polling continued.

In Kolkata's Entally constituency, Priyanka Tibrewal alleged TMC polling agents tried to assault her after she objected to overcrowding and lack of voter privacy inside a booth.

"In a small room where polling was taking place, there were six TMC polling agents and one each from BJP, CPI(M), Congress and an Independent. Along with them, there were five polling staff members, making the room very crowded. They were practically sitting on the EVM, and there was no privacy for voters," she claimed.

In Basanti, BJP candidate Bikash Sardar alleged 200–250 TMC 'goons' attacked his car, assaulted his driver, and hurled stones while visiting polling booths.

"TMC gundagiri everywhere," he alleged.

Bhangar tense, ISF claims TMC threatened voters

Tension gripped Bhangar and adjoining areas of South 24 Parganas during the second phase of polling in West Bengal on Wednesday, with the Indian Secular Front accusing TMC of intimidating polling agents and voters. The TMC denied the allegations.

Trouble was reported from several pockets of Bhangar and Canning Purba, prompting heavy deployment of central forces, state police and National Investigation Agency teams after the Election Commission directed the agency to ensure no use of explosives. NIA officials have been deployed in at least seven constituencies.

The ISF alleged death threats to its polling agents at Hedia and claimed voters were being driven out of booths. Candidate Arabul Islam accused the administration of bias and said "votes are being looted".

Madras HC orders CBI probe into transformer purchase

CHENNAI, 29 APRIL

The Madras High Court ordered a CBI inquiry on Wednesday into the alleged irregularities surrounding the procurement of 45,000 distribution transformers by the Tamil Nadu government.

The court order follows claims that the exchequer incurred a loss of Rs 397 crore between 2021 and 2023.

Petitions were filed by NGO Arappor Iyakkam seeking an inquiry by a Special Investigation Team, while AIADMK legal wing functionaries E Saravanan and Rajkumar sought a CBI probe, alleging that irregularities amounting to Rs 397 crore occurred during the procurement of 45,000 transformers when Senthil Balaji served as the Minister for Electricity under the DMK government.

Chief Justice SA Dharmadhikari and Justice G Arulmurugan, which heard the petitions, directed that all complaints be transferred to the CBI.

Ordering the CBI to conduct a fresh investigation into this matter, the judges directed the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) to hand over all documents related to the case to the Central agency within two weeks.

The judges directed the CBI, upon receiving the documents, to conduct and conclude the investigation expeditiously and to take appropriate action in accordance with the law.

They also ordered TANGEDCO, the DVAC, and the Tamil Nadu government to extend their full cooperation to the CBI.

After the Madras High Court ordered a CBI inquiry into the procurement of transformers, senior DMK leader Senthil Balaji claimed that all procedures were followed in the tender process.

Meanwhile, PMK leader Anbumani welcomed the CBI enquiry ordered by the Madras High Court. *— PTI*

Rahul calls Nicobar project 'country's biggest scam'

SRI VIJAYA PURAM, 29 APRIL

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged that the Great Nicobar project at Campbell Bay in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is "one of the biggest scams and crimes against the country's natural and tribal heritage," as the project would entail clearing 160 sq km of rainforest.

The Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha said he would raise the issue in Parliament. Gandhi called it a "wholesale theft" and land grabbing for Adani. "This is not development. This is destruction dressed in development's language," he said. Gandhi, who arrived in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Sunday, met members of tribal communities.

"The government calls what it is doing here a 'project'. What I have seen is not a project. It is millions of trees marked for the axe. The people on this island — both the Adivasi communities and the settlers — are being robbed of what is rightfully theirs," he said.

The Centre states that the Rs 81,000 crore project will boost maritime trade. *—PTI*

NEW EXECUTIVE PANEL FORMED

Lokesh takes charge as TDP's Working Prez

AMRAVATI, 29 APRIL

The TDP in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday constituted its new executive committees, with party Chief N Chandrababu Naidu's son and IT Minister Nara Lokesh assuming charge as the party's working President.

Naidu, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, administered the oath to newly appointed members of the Politburo, national and state committees.

The leadership described Lokesh's new position as a significant responsibility aimed at strengthening the organisation across all levels.

The leadership elevated mandal and cluster-level leaders to the Politburo, reflecting its emphasis on grassroots workers and the principle of "cadre is the leader," while prioritising those who worked hard.

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh and CM Chandrababu Naidu *—PTI*

The committees were formed after multiple screenings and strategies, respecting seniors, accommodating newcomers, and recognising those who contributed to the party's strength.

The highlight of the swearing-in ceremony were Lokesh, Mangalagiri cluster in-charge G Dhanunjay, and Gajapatinagaram mandal president G Sridevi.

The party also accommodated individuals who have been active on social media, recognising their contribution to organisational outreach and communication efforts.

Naidu said his government is implementing multiple welfare schemes while accelerating infrastructure and irrigation projects to ensure inclusive development across the state.

Efforts are underway to reduce power purchase costs and tariffs were reduced by 30 paise last year with plans to bring down another 30 paise.

The TDP supremo alleged that the Opposition continues to indulge in "conspiracies and misinformation." He accused the YSRCP of attempting to obstruct funds and investments coming into the state, while his government has succeeded in bringing in large-scale investments through public trust. *—PTI*

HC issues fresh notice to Kejriwal on ED plea

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

The Delhi HC on Wednesday issued a fresh notice to AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on pleas by the ED challenging his acquittal in two cases against him for not appearing before the agency despite summonses in the excise policy case.

Justice Sharma noted that according to the registry, the earlier notice issued to the former CM had not been served.

The ED counsel said notice was issued to Kejriwal on 1 April but no one appeared on his behalf.The cases stem from the ED's complaint to the trial court that Kejriwal intentionally disobeyed summonses.

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday also said it will hear on 4 May the CBI's petition against a trial court order discharging former Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others in the liquor policy case. *— PTI*

MANIPUR SEES PROTEST AGAINST GUNFIGHT IN KUKI VILLAGES

CHURACHANDPUR, 29 APRIL

Thousands of people on Wednesday took out multiple rallies in Kuki-majority areas of Manipur's four districts to protest the recent gunfight at a village in Ukhrul district that left two people dead on 24 April.

The protestors also demanded swift judicial action to find out the truth behind the audio tape linked to former chief minister N Biren Singh, which surfaced during the height of ethnic violence in 2024.

The protests were organised by Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights (KWOHR) and the Kuki Women Union in Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Chandel and Tengnoupal districts.

At the Koite ground in Churachandpur town, leaders of the two organisations condemned the attack on Ukhrul's Mulam and Songphel Kuki villages and demanded Singh's arrest.

The KWOHR had submitted transcripts of the tapes to the Supreme Court-appointed investigating officer and the National Human Rights Commission, urging an investigation into the tape.

They later submitted a memorandum to PM Narendra Modi through the Churachandpur deputy commissioner. *—PTI*

Cop killed as piling rig collapses on him in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

A police constable was killed after a heavy piling rig toppled on him at an under-construction flyover site in Mankhurd on the Sion-Panvel Highway on Tuesday night, officials said. The victim, Santosh Gopal Chavan was returning home on his motorcycle when the accident occurred. A piling rig used for drilling foundation piles collapsed at the site, striking him. He was rushed to a nearby hospital but was declared dead. Preliminary findings suggest unstable soil may have caused the collapse. Police have begun action and are registering a case against the contractor for alleged negligence, while also probing safety compliance and supervisor roles. Earlier incidents include a crane collapse in Bandra-Kurla and a fatal Metro girder collapse in Mulund. *—PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Six women killed as bus rams van in Gujarat

SABARKANTHA, 29 APRIL

Six women were killed and eight others injured after a private bus rammed into a van on National Highway 48 in Sabarkantha district on Wednesday, police said. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police AK Patel, the van was ferrying women from Modasa in Aravalli district when a speeding bus hit it from behind on the Shamlaji–Himmatnagar stretch. The women, part of a catering team for social events, were travelling to Hunj village in Himmatnagar for a function. Six women died on the spot, while six other women, a man, and the van driver were injured. The injured were taken to Himmatnagar civil hospital, where two were stated to be critical. *—PTI*

Maoist killed in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district

CHAIBASA, 29 APRIL

A Maoist was killed in an exchange of fire between security forces and Naxals in the Kolhan forest region of Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Wednesday, police said. SP Amit Renu said that during a search, the forces found the body of Israel Purty alias Amrit, a member of the Sagen Angaria unit of the CPI (Maoist). "The killed rebel had a bounty of Rs 1 lakh on his head," Renu said. The SP said the fight broke out during a search conducted by a joint team of police and the CRPF in the forest area along the border of Goilkera and Tonto police station limits. Police sources after the elimination of several top Maoist leaders in the region in encounters, only Misir Besra, a PB member of the CPI (Maoist) carrying a reward of Rs 1 crore, remains active. *—PTI*

Schools shut in Mizoram as heavy rains lash state

AIZAWL, 29 APRIL

Schools remained closed across five districts of Mizoram on Wednesday as heavy rain and gusty winds continued to batter the state for the second day. Closures were enforced in Aizawl, Serchhip, Lunglei, Hnahthial and Lawngtlai. The Aizawl district administration warned of heightened risks of landslides, mudflows, rockfalls and flash floods due to persistent downpours. The State Disaster Management and Rehabilitation department said over 70 houses, along with churches, schools and government buildings, were damaged between Monday and Tuesday. The IMD recorded Aizawl's highest rainfall at 57.8 mm in 24 hours and forecast continued heavy rain, heavy thunderstorms and winds up to 60 kmph in many parts of the state till Friday. *—PTI*

Tribal who took skeleton to bank was harassed: BJD

He walked to the graveyard to rebury sister

BHUBANESWAR/ KEONJHAR, 29 APRIL

Ahead of an administrative inquiry into the incident of a man carrying his sister's skeleton to a bank in Odisha's Keonjhar district as proof of death to withdraw money, the BJD on Wednesday alleged that Jeetu Munda was made to walk 3 km to the village graveyard to re-bury the remains.

The allegation was made by Ghasipura MLA Badri Narayan Patra, who visited Dianali village in the Patana block of Keonjhar district and met Munda, 50, at his house.

Patra led a BJD fact-finding team that expressed concern over the "cruelty" meted out to the tribal.

"Before bringing his sister's skeleton to the bank on 27 April, he had approached the authorities to release money from her account when she was bedridden. The bank did not cooperate. The family had deposited Rs 19,300 after selling cattle. Munda was told to bring his ailing sister to the bank," Patra told reporters.

Jeetu taking his sister's body to the bank to prove she died do it *—SCREENGRAB*

After the matter came out the police intervened and Munda was asked to take the skeleton back to the graveyard. Patra said, "He carried the skeleton on his shoulder and walked 3 km. The police followed him in a jeep."

The shocking video clip of Munda carrying the remains of his sister from Maliposi branch of Odisha Grameen Bank on Monday has gone viral on social media.

Patra said that people did not mind when Jeetu carried the skeleton to the bank, but many videographed when he walked to the graveyard with the remains.

Meanwhile, Odisha Grameen Bank's Maliposi branch manager Susanta Kumar Sethi clarified that the bank had sought only the death certificate and not the corpse to allow withdrawal of the money. *— PTI*

RIGHT TO WORSHIP

How can a non-believer enter Sabarimala Temple, asks SC

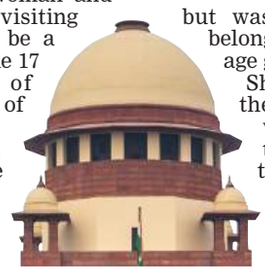
NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

The SC said that while deciding the right to enter issue, it has to examine whether a devotee or a non-devotee is claiming that right *—PTI*

- The bench responded to the submission saying that the woman was not prevented as she is SC, but was stopped as she belonged to the 10 to 50 age group

"How can a non-believer in North India claim the right of entry to the Sabarimala temple?" the SC asked and added that while deciding the issue regarding the right to enter temples, it has to examine whether a devotee or a non-devotee is claiming that right. The observation of the nine-judge Constitution bench came while hearing petitions regarding discrimination against women at places of worship, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, and on the religious freedom practised by different faiths.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for two women named Bindu Ammini and Kanakadurga, submitted that one of the petitioners is a Scheduled Caste woman and stopping her from visiting the temple would be a "violation of Article 17 (Abolition of Untouchability) of the Constitution."



The bench responded to the submission that the woman was not prevented because she is SC, but was stopped as she belonged to the 10 to 50 age group.

She argued that after the 2018 judgment was declared, the two women went to the temple.

"When they came out, certain Sangh leaders spoke of 'shuddhikaran.' I filed a petition in this court. These were the only two women who succeeded in conducting darshan," she said.

At this point, Justice Nagarathna said, "Who is claiming this right? Is it a devotee or a non-devotee? Is it a person in North India who has nothing to do with this temple? This temple is in South India." *— PTI*

Power cuts trigger protests across Kerala

T'PURAM, 29 APRIL

Protests erupted across Kerala against undeclared power cuts, with frustrated consumers picketing local KSEB offices in the small hours.

In Thrissur district, a large crowd marched to the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) Kundannur division office at Erumapetty on Tuesday midnight after prolonged outages.

The protest continued till early Wednesday with several people lying down inside and outside the office premises demanding a resolution.

Although the officials informed the protesters that the disruption in power supply was due to a fault in a major feeder, they continued the protest.

Similar protests were reported from Kozhikode, where Youth League workers staged a demonstration at the Panniyankara KSEB office in the small hours over power outages. At the Nadapuram substation, activists held a candlelight protest.

The KSEB office in Pandikkad in Malappuram also saw a similar protest by Youth Congress activists last night.

In many places, the KSEB employees reportedly sought police protection because of possible protests over power disruption.

The protests occurred after the KSEB announced that it may impose short-duration power curtailments of up to 30 minutes between 6 pm and midnight to maintain grid stability amid surging demand due to extreme heat.

The KSEB said a sharp rise in electricity demand has put significant stress on the network, raising the risk of serious disruptions if not managed in time.

The State Load Despatch Centre's chief engineer has been authorised to enforce short-duration restrictions during peak evening hours, if necessary, to ensure grid stability.

Electricity Minister K Krishnankutty said the power crunch was triggered by extreme heat and increased use of induction cookers and air conditioners. *— PTI*

Give maternity leave for 3rd pregnancy: HC

CHENNAI, 29 APRIL

The Madras High Court held that no discrimination could be shown by the government in approving maternity benefits, especially leave for the third pregnancy to employees.

Justices R Suresh Kumar and N Senthil Kumar gave the ruling on 28 April allowing the petition of Shayee Nisha.

The bench set aside the orders of the Principal District Judge, Villupuram, dated 27 March 2026, which rejected the representation of the petitioner seeking maternity leave from 2 February 2026 to 1 February 2027, and the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal, Villupuram, which asked her to join on 27 April 2026.

The bench directed the district judge to consider the application submitted by Nisha and sanction the maternity leave like that of women with first and second pregnancy, unmindful of a GO dated 13 March 2026, within a week.

The petitioner said she sought maternity leave for her third pregnancy, which was rejected through the order, dated 27 March 2026 passed by the Principal District Judge, Villupuram, by citing GO (MS) No.18, HR (FR-III) Department.

Citing a judgment of the SC and judgments of the division bench of the Madras HC, the judges said that having receipt of the order of the Division bench, dated 21 January 2026 and having referred so, the government has come forward to issue the said GO, whereby, although maternity leave has been allowed for the third pregnancy, it has been restricted to 12 weeks, that is three months.

This restriction made by the government by issuing a GO under Article 162 of the Constitution is against the dictum of the Supreme Court, the bench added. *— PTI*

15 TN fishers released from Sri Lanka arrive in Chennai

CHENNAI, 29 APRIL

Fifteen Tamil Nadu fishermen arrived here on Wednesday after their release from Sri Lankan custody.

The fishermen from Rameswaram were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy earlier this year for allegedly crossing maritime boundaries.

The repatriation of the fishermen was secured after the talks held in Colombo by Vice President CP Radhakrishnan.

The Tamil Nadu fisheries department arranged transport for the fishermen to reach their native places. *— PTI*

IIT Kharagpur student ends life

KOLKATA, 29 APRIL

A 22-year-old MTech student was found dead in his hostel room at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, the second incident reported on the campus in 10 days.

The student, Soham Haldar, was found hanging from the ceiling of his hostel room on Tuesday and was immediately taken to the IIT hospital, where doctors declared him dead, an IIT Kharagpur official said.

Haldar, a dual-degree student in Electronics and Electrical Engineering, was a boarder at the Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Hall of Residence on the campus.

Police from the Kharagpur Town police station launched a probe into the incident as preliminary findings indicated that it could be suicide, although the cause of death can be ascertained after the autopsy, the official said.

IIT Director Suman Chakraborty said the institute will strengthen its mechanism to identify stressed, depressed students and take steps to address their issues.

The student's parents who hailed from Barasat in North 24 Parganas district, have come to the campus, he said.

"Haldar's friends, faculty and staffers did not find any stress in him. But we need to enable students suffering from stress to open up," he said.

Investigators are also scrutinising CCTV footage from the hostel premises to piece together the sequence of events leading to the shocking incident. — PTI

CRIME OF PASSION

Minor girl detained, 'boyfriend,' pal held for killing her mom

RANCHI, 29 APRIL

- The girl said she had killed her mom colluding with her boyfriend, Arbaz, 20, and his 3 friends. She killed her mom as she had refused to give her money

Police detained a minor girl and arrested two persons, including her "boyfriend" from Bihar's Gaya, for allegedly killing her 50-year-old mother for not giving money, an officer said on Wednesday. The incident happened in Jharkhand's Ranchi district.

The matter came to light on 27 April, three days after the incident. The deceased, Nahida Parveen, was a resident of Manitola, a police officer said.

City SP Paras Rana said a complaint in this regard was lodged by the victim's brother-in-law on 26 April, in which he stated the matter looked suspicious.

"We arrested two people from Gaya district, including the boyfriend of the victim's 17-year-old adopted daughter, and detained the girl. The girl confessed, stating that she had killed her mother colluding with her boyfriend, Arbaz Khan, 20, and his three friends. She killed her mother as she had refused to give her money," Rana told reporters. The daughter also said she wanted to marry her boyfriend and was spending a lot of money on him. This came to her mother's knowledge, and after learning this, she refused to give money. After this the daughter gave Rs 5 lakh to her boyfriend, he said.

On 24 April, she, her boyfriend and his three friends, killed Nahida by suffocating her with a pillow, the SP said. On 26 April, the victim's body was buried at a graveyard, he said.

On Tuesday, when police exhumed the Nahida's body in the presence of a magistrate, injuries were found on her neck. — PTI

No OMS glitches, Class 12 results in May third week: CBSE

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

The CBSE refuted a media report on glitches and delays in the evaluation of Class 12 answer sheets under its On-Screen Marking system, asserting that the process is working "perfectly" and is on schedule.

Speaking to PTI on Wednesday, the Controller of Examinations, Sanyam Bhardwaj, said students can expect their results in the third week of May, as indicated earlier.

He said a media report flagging technical issues in the newly introduced system is "far away from facts."

"Evaluation is going on perfectly, better than the previous evaluation," Bhardwaj said, adding the board is "proud" of its full-scale On Screen Marking (OSM) system. "I refute everything reported by a news portal. Everything is fine. We are proud that we have started this process," he said.

Highlighting the feedback from evaluators, Bhardwaj said teachers are satisfied with the system.

"They are sending me photographs and messages thanking us, saying they are fortunate to work with this system," he said, adding that even those not assigned evaluation duties have shown interest in participating. — PTI

COURTROOM EGO BATTLE

Case posted for 2046 to be heard in July

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

A day after adjourning a defamation suit till 2046 after labelling it as an "ego fight" between the parties at the "fag end of their lives," the Bombay High Court on Wednesday posted the matter for hearing in July.

Justice Jitendra Jain had on Tuesday criticised the parties' persistence in litigation that prevented it from prioritising more urgent matters.

On Wednesday, plaintiff Tarinibahen Desai's advocate Swaraj Jadhav moved an application in court, urging it to expunge the remarks made against her in the order passed on Tuesday.

Justice Jain accepted the request and ordered deletion of the remarks, and also modified the next date of hearing from the year 2046 to 15 July 2026.

Ninety-year-old Desai had filed a defamation suit in 2017 against one Kilkilraj Bhansali, stemming from a dispute within the Shyam Co-operative Housing Society in Mumbai.

The dispute involves notices, letters, and resolutions related to a 2015 annual general meeting, which included a resolution expelling Desai from the housing society.Desai sought Rs 20 crore as damages claiming that the communications of the society were defamatory. The HC said in its Tuesday order that during past hearings, the court had said the case could be worked out if parties tendered apologies. However, Desai had insisted on pursuing the suit for defamation. Her lawyer Swaraj Jadhav on Wednesday said that she is still keen on pursuing the suit. *— PTI*

- Justice Jain had on Tuesday criticised the parties' persistence in litigation that prevented it from hearing more urgent matters

Porn video disrupts Delhi HC proceedings

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

A hearing through videoconferencing in the Delhi High Court was disrupted on Wednesday after a participant played obscene content on the virtual platform.

Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma mentioned the incident before a bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhaya and Justice Tejas Karia, seeking action to stop the circulation and dissemination of the recordings of the incident.

The chief justice said appropriate directions have been issued to the administration registrar general regarding the matter.

Sharma said such episodes damage the sanctity and overall integrity of the court.

"There has been a disconcerting incident or incidents in the pre-lunch session, I gather, in some courts, not in one court," he said.

Chief Justice Upadhyaya said recordings of court proceedings were prohibited under high court rules, and if any unauthorised content was circulating, the authorities would detect the same.

Virtual proceedings in the chief justice's court were disrupted thrice during the pre-lunch session when a participant under the name 'Sh*tjeet Sighn' played an obscene video.

At the same time, an audio in the background announced that the meeting had been "hacked."

"Shut down the meeting right now. You've been hacked. Shut the meeting down. The meeting is not over," the audio said. The virtual meeting was shut down for some time after each incident. *— PTI*

TRANSGENDER FESTIVAL

People take part in the 'Therottam' (car festival) during the annual transgender festival at Koovagam in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district on Wednesday. Transgenders from across India gather at the Koothandavar Temple to reenact a Mahabharata legend, marrying the deity Aravan and mourning his death as widows. The festival commemorates Aravan's self-sacrifice for the Pandavas' victory. The event features vibrant celebrations and a grand parade of the Koothandavar idol, fostering a sense of solidarity for the LGBTQIA+ community —PTI

UAE's OPEC exit to heighten volatility in oil mkts: Report

—MAGNIFIC

In a seismic shift for global energy markets, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has been rocked by the United Arab Emirates' decision to withdraw from both the core group and the expanded OPEC+ alliance. While the move may not deliver immediate oil price relief, it could unleash heightened volatility and undermine the cartel's long-term price stability, warns a fresh report from ASK Wealth Advisors.

OPEC, established in 1960, is a permanent intergovernmental organization designed to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among member countries. Acting as a cartel, it stabilizes oil markets by setting production quotas, influencing prices through supply control. Its members collectively hold around 75–80 per cent of the world's proven crude oil reserves and produce roughly 35–40 per cent of global supply. Since 2016, the group has collaborated with non-members like Russia under the OPEC+ framework to further manage market stability, with Saudi Arabia serving as the de facto leader due to its dominant production capacity.

As OPEC's third-largest producer and a founding member—having joined via Abu Dhabi in 1967—the UAE's exit carries immense weight. The decision blends strategic ambition, economic pragmatism, and geopolitical recalibration. Over recent years, the UAE has aggressively expanded its production capacity, targeting 5 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2027, up from 3.4 million bpd prior to the recent regional conflict involving Iran.

Constrained by OPEC+ quotas amid strong global demand and rising energy security concerns, Abu Dhabi sees growing opportunity costs in limiting output from its low-cost reserves. The report frames this as a calculated attempt to maximize returns before a long-term global transition away from fossil fuels risks stranding assets.

Yet the near-term oil price impact is far from straightforward. Markets are already strained by disruptions linked to tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, including supply shocks, shipping risks, and geopolitical uncertainty following recent conflict involving Iran. With global spare capacity at historically low levels, the UAE's departure may initially heighten uncertainty, pushing up risk premiums rather than lowering prices.

VOLATILITY OVER STRAIGHT DECLINES

Looking ahead, the exit could weaken the "cartel premium" traditionally embedded in OPEC+ pricing. Rather than a steady decline in oil prices, markets may face wider fluctuations and reduced predictability. The UAE is unlikely to flood the market aggressively, as doing so would strain customer relationships and destabilize long-term pricing. Instead, expect gradual and measured production increases.

The move also exposes structural fragility within OPEC+. Questions loom over whether the group can maintain discipline without a key member. Will Saudi Arabia shoulder deeper production cuts to stabilize prices? Such uncertainty may erode market confidence in the bloc's ability to coordinate supply effectively.

WHO ARE IN OPEC?

AS OF APRIL 2026, OPEC COMPRISES 12 MEMBER COUNTRIES:

- Algeria
- Congo
- Equatorial Guinea
- Gabon
- Iran
- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Libya
- Nigeria
- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates
- Venezuela

ROOTS IN A LONG-BREWING RIFT

Tensions between the UAE and Saudi Arabia have simmered for years, surfacing prominently before the 2020 OPEC+ summit and intensifying in 2021. Post-pandemic recovery saw the UAE push to restore output more quickly, while Saudi Arabia prioritized price support through tighter supply controls.

These differences reflect deeper economic contrasts. Saudi Arabia depends heavily on oil revenues to fund ambitious projects like NEOM, whereas the UAE benefits from a more diversified economy spanning tourism, finance, and technology.

The UAE's infrastructure has also highlighted its frustrations. The Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline proved critical during recent disruptions, handling significant volumes despite quota restrictions—underscoring the constraints imposed by OPEC+ agreements.

Geopolitical realignment

Recent geopolitical developments have further widened the divide. The US-Israel offensive against Iran earlier this year reshaped regional dynamics, reinforcing the UAE's alignment with Western partners while exposing lingering tensions with Saudi Arabia.

Abu Dhabi increasingly views a Saudi-dominated OPEC as outdated, opting instead to prioritize national interests and strategic alliances. Freed from quotas, the UAE is positioned to ramp up production once key shipping routes stabilize.

Some analysts even speculate about broader institutional disengagements—from regional blocs such as the Arab League or Gulf Cooperation Council—as shifting geopolitics redraw alliances in the post-conflict landscape. —*ANI*

SALAR

Did UAE radar control the weather in Iran?

Back in 2018, an Iranian general put forth a theory about the country's drought: Israel was stealing Iran's clouds.

He later walked back on the comments after Iran's own meteorological organisation contradicted him.

Now, a similar claim has reemerged during the Iran war.

Social media posts with millions of views reference a "weather war" and point to dams being filled and highways blanketed in snow as proof of climate interference in the region.

The viral conspiracy theory focuses on a technology called cloud seeding and a facility in the United Arab Emirates called the Research Program for Rain Enhancement Science.

So what's the truth? Can a country really make it rain across borders? DW Fact Check consulted physicists and engineers to break down how the technology works.

DID AN ATTACK ON A CLOUD SEEDING FACILITY CHANGE THE TEMPERATURE?

Claim: "Wow, Iran bombed the 'Cloud-Seeding' radars in the UAE and suddenly the temperature shifted by 5 degrees in Tehran and it now it's raining and snowing," an X user wrote in a post viewed 3.4 million times, along with a video of a mosque covered in snow.

This claim seems to have originated from a since-deleted post from the Iranian embassy in Afghanistan. No archived version of that post exists, but a major Iranian newspaper reported the embassy wrote: "After Iran destroyed the UAE's secret climate change centre, the region's weather patterns completely changed.

Iraq and Iran are now experiencing heavy weekly rainfall and a 5-degree drop in temperature."

FALSE CLAIMS

There are several issues with this claim — there's no evidence this research centre was attacked in the first place, and scientists told DW this is a complete misrepresentation of how cloud seeding technology works.

First, a weather report: A forecast from the World Meteorological Organisation said to expect, "moderate / locally heavy rain and thunderstorms (flash floods / landslides possible) in NW & W Islamic Republic of Iran on 18-21 April."

Videos of overflowing dams and elevated rivers are consistent with that forecast.

As for the snow, that would genuinely be strange in Tehran in April. However, the video in question doesn't show Tehran, but the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, Iran. That town sits at an elevation of nearly 1,000m in between two mountain ranges. Snow in April is not uncommon there, according to the Weather Atlas' historical data. It's also not uncommon for drought-stricken Iran to receive periods of intense precipitation — and climate change is exacerbating the severity of these droughts and extreme rainfall events.

UAE'S RAIN RESEARCH

The UAE does have a centre called the Research Program for Rain Enhancement Science (UAEREP). But it's not a "secret climate change centre," as allegedly claimed in the Iran embassy's deleted post.

According to its website, UAEREP has been around since 1990 and "is at the forefront of advancing rainfall enhancement research and driving innovations that strengthen global water security."

They both fund research from around the world and pilot their own cloud seeding operations.

A Google News search showed no results about the centre being targeted in an Iranian strike; nor did any wire service, which consistently cover attacks on civilian infrastructure in the region.

CLOUD SEEDING?

Scientists discovered a technique to encourage rain from clouds that might already be on the verge of precipitation.

They do this by releasing agents like silver iodide or sodium chloride into clouds using planes, or ground-based launchers. "The key thing here is it doesn't make rain out of nothing," Edward Gryspeerdt, a professor in atmospheric physics at Imperial College London, told DW. "You can't have a clear sky, suddenly seed it, and get clouds and rain appearing. You need these clouds to exist already on the edge of raining, and you're just kind of tipping them over the edge."

CLOUD SEEDING CAPABILITY 'VERY SMALL SCALE'

To date, the cloud seeding technologies cannot affect weather patterns across an entire region.

"Even if they worked, they would still be at a very small scale," Gryspeerdt said. "They're not at the scale where they can change atmospheric flow patterns, for example, and shift rain far across the planet."

The current scientific literature suggests cloud seeding can increase precipitation by 5-20% on a micro scale. "Maybe that precipitation can last longer and fall somewhere else, but the scale of what we're talking about — of weather patterns and increased precipitation in Iran — is so much larger than what can be accomplished with a seeding facility," said researcher Armin Sorooshian. "It just doesn't make sense," he added. —*DW News*

Videos of overflowing dams and elevated rivers in Iran are going viral on social media —SCREENGRAB

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

In a fractured world order, where does the Global South fit?

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney was among the first world leaders to warn of a "ruptured" global order following policy shifts under Donald Trump. He urged middle powers to unite to preserve what remains of the liberal international system. Yet an increasingly pressing question remains: what role will the global south play in shaping what comes next?

Some analysts believe its role will be decisive. Speaking at a conference in India earlier this year, Finland's president Alexander Stubb argued that "the global south will decide what the next world order will look like". But the reality is more complex.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL SOUTH?

It may be premature to declare the end of Western dominance. While conflicts such as the war involving Iran have prompted some nations to question an international system where power often dictates outcomes, the global south is far from a unified bloc.

There is no universally accepted definition of the term. Although it suggests countries in the southern hemisphere, many so-called global south states lie north of the equator, while nations like Australia and New Zealand are typically considered part of the global north.

Broad groupings that lump together Africa, Latin America and Asia are overly simplistic. The classification becomes even more blurred when considering major economies like China, which some include in the global south while others do not. Crucially, the global south lacks a recognised leader, and there is little appetite for one.

DIVERGENT AGENDAS IN A FRAGMENTED BLOC

Recent geopolitical tensions underscore this lack of cohesion. Many global south nations are pursuing flexible foreign policies, engaging with multiple partners and alliances to maximise their own national interests.

Take BRICS, which has expanded to include ten members, among them Iran and the United Arab Emirates, despite tensions between them. The bloc has struggled to present a unified stance on the Iran conflict. While China and Russia have condemned US and Israeli actions, others such as India have adopted a more cautious tone, calling for de-escalation.

This reflects deeper structural issues. BRICS members remain divided on key strategic priorities and lack an effective mechanism for resolving internal disputes.

Beyond multilateral groupings, individual countries are also charting distinct paths. China, for instance, has a strong interest in maintaining ties with Iran, a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and a key partner in efforts to build alternatives to Western-led institutions. Stability in the Strait of Hormuz is also vital for China's energy security.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has positioned itself as a potential mediator between Washington and Tehran, while also seeking to protect its strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia. Under existing defence arrangements, Islamabad would be obliged to assist the kingdom if it were attacked.India, for its part, continues to pursue a policy of "strategic autonomy". As Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar has emphasised, India is neither aligned with the West nor opposed to it. This approach allows New Delhi to maintain close ties with the United States while also renewing imports of Iranian energy.

Students from India's Gurukul School of Art call for an end to the war in West Asia —EPA

A MULTIPOLAR PREFERENCE

In his book 'The Triangle of Power', Stubb argues that the world is dividing into three broad camps: a US-led West, a China- and Russia-aligned East, and a global south composed of middle and smaller powers. In this framework, the south acts as a "pendulum" between the two poles. However, this interpretation risks oversimplification. Many global south nations appear less interested in choosing sides than in promoting a multipolar world order—one not dominated by any single power. There is also a strong desire for greater representation in global governance. Many of these countries, shaped by histories of colonialism, seek to address perceived injustices that persist in the current system. South Africa's decision to bring a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice over the Gaza conflict illustrates this push for accountability.

FLEXIBLE ALLIANCES IN A CHANGING WORLD

The fragmentation of the global order has reinforced the importance of flexible diplomacy. Rather than fixed alliances, many global south countries are adopting pragmatic approaches, shifting partnerships depending on circumstances.

Indonesia offers a clear example. In recent weeks, it has signed a significant defence agreement with Washington while its president, Prabowo Subianto, has also engaged directly with Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

Such manoeuvring highlights a broader trend: cooperation with the West when beneficial, alongside parallel engagement with China, Russia and other powers.

AN UNCERTAIN BUT INFLUENTIAL FUTURE

The global south is becoming an increasingly important force in international politics. Yet its influence will not stem from unity or collective action, but from its diversity and strategic flexibility.

Rather than acting as a single bloc, these nations are likely to shape the emerging world order through individual choices—tilting the balance of power issue by issue.

How, and to what extent, they will do so remains one of the defining questions of this evolving geopolitical era. —*The Conversation*

IRAN BETTER GET SMART SOON: TRUMP

Pak says Iran war damaging all economic gains made in past 2 years

DUBAI, 29 APRIL

In an apparent threat o Iran, US President Donald Trump stated on Wednesday that Iran "better get smart soon", with peace talks seemingly stalled. His Truth Social post came a day after he said that Iran had informed his administration that it was in a "state of collapse".

Trump criticised Iran's handling of nuclear negotiations.

"Iran can't get their act together. They don't know how to sign a nonnuclear deal" he wrote.

His comments come after Iran had proposed ending the war and opening the Strait of Hormuz provided that its nuclear proliferation programme was not discussed in any negotiations with the US.

Trump's post featured an AI-generated image of himself holding a gun with the caption "no more Mr nice guy".

Meanwhile, Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said that according to satellite imagery, majority of Iran's highly enriched uranium was likely still at the its Isfahan nuclear complex, despite the repeated bombardment by Israel and the US, including during the 12 day war last June.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that Pakistan is continuing efforts to help ease tensions, despite the previous direct negotiations in Islamabad failing without a deal.

Sharif said before leaving for Moscow, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke to him by phone and "assured me that after consulting with his leadership, he would respond as soon as possible".

Pakistan said its weekly oil import bill has surged by about 167 per cent due to soaring global energy prices, while European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the war was costing the EU almost 500 million euros (USD 600 million) a day.

"Our weekly pre-war oil bill was around USD 300 million, and today it is up to USD 800 million," Shariff said at a Cabinet meeting, adding that the war was costing Pakistan the economic gains it made over the past two years.

Meanwhile, Israel continued to strike Lebanon despite the ceasefire, while Hezbollah allegedly killed an IDF soldier and his relative. Lebanese state media said that at least three civilians were killed in bombings, while Israel continued to demolish buildings.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel's next objective would be blowing up drones in Lebanon and this would "take time", signalling limited intentions for prolonged peace. —*PTI*

TRUMP TELLS AIDES TO PREPARE FOR LONG BLOCKADE: REPORT

Trump has told his aides in a meeting to prepare for a long naval blockade of Iranian ports, the Wall Street Journal reported, signalling his intentions to extend the pressure on Tehran with no clear end in sight. Trump appears to think that that was a less risky option than resuming bombing Iran, the report suggested.

'Vance fears Hegseth is misleading Trump'

WASHINGTON, 29 APRIL

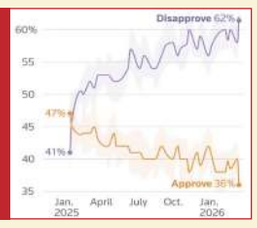
US Vice President JD Vance has expressed concerns that Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth is not giving accurate information about the Iran war to US President Doanld Trump, according to a report.

In a closed doors meeting, Vance has "repeatedly questioned" the truth about Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine's claims that the US has obliterated Iran's military capabilities, the Atlantic reported, citing sources.

Vance's confidants believe "that Hegseth's portrayal has been so positive as to be misleading," the report added.

However, Vance "has presented his concerns as his own rather than accusing Hegseth or Caine of misleading the President," the report said. Vance has also raised concerns that US munitions may be depleted against Iran, which could have consequences in potential combat situations with Russia, China or North Korea, the report added. —*AGENCIES*

Trump's approval rating drops to record low this term



Donald Trump's approval rating dropped to its lowest in his second term at 34 per cent as Americans grow increasingly frustrated with the rising cost of living amid the war with Iran. The Reuters/Ipsos poll shows a 2 point drop from mid-April. Trump's lowest approval rating so far has been at 33 per cent, just 6 days after the Capitol riot on 6 January, 2021.

Japanese oil tanker sails through Hormuz amid blockade

A Japanese-owned tanker carrying around 2 million barrels of crude oil has transited through the Strait of Hormuz, despite the ongoing Iran and US blockade. Iran state media said that the ship, Idemitsu Maru, obtained permission from Iranian authorities, and was anchored off Abu Dabhi for more than a week. Earlier, a Russian superyacht linked to President Vladimir Putin's billionaire allies, also passed through the Strait.

China to grant zero-tariffs to African nations

BEIJING, 29 APRIL

China announced it will expand zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic ties, starting 1 May. During the two-year implementation period, China will continue the signing of China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development agreement. It will also upgrade the green channel for the export of African agricultural products to China, further enhancing trade, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. The latest move extends zero-tariff treatment to an additional 20 African nations. Since December 2024, China had granted zero-tariff treatment on 100 per cent of tariff lines for 33 least African countries. —*PTI*

Lanka ex-prez, secy indicted for fund misuse

COLOMBO, 29 APRIL

Sri Lanka's former president Ranil Wickremesinghe and his secretary, Saman Ekanayake, were indicted at Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court on Wednesday over the alleged misappropriation of funds worth 16.6 million Sri Lankan rupees. The court ordered the Criminal Investigation Department to probe the situation and submit a progress report by 8 July. The two are accused of using state funds to finance Wickremesinghe's visit to Britain's University of Wolverhampton in 2023 to attend his wife's graduation. Wickremesinghe defended the expenditure, stating he had attended the event while returning to Sri Lanka from other international engagements. Wickremesinghe, who served as president from 2022 to 2024, is the first head of state to be arrested. —*PTI*

DHS funding will soon run out: White House

WASHINGTON, 29 APRIL

The White House warned lawmakers that funding for Department of Homeland Security personnel will be exhausted by May. A memo from the Office of Management and Budget stated that money President Donald Trump tapped to pay the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and other DHS workers will "soon run out"

These comments come as the House slow-walks legislation to end the longest-ever lapse in agency funding—a delay that threatens airport operations and national security.

The House is expected to vote as soon as Wednesday on the Senate budget resolution that is designed to unlock a multi-step process to eventually fund the department. The comments are aimed at hurrying the House into approving the budget resolution.

The Trump administration's pressure may help House Speaker Mike Johnson break the current deadlock in the House. His narrow Republican majority is currently paralysed by internal disagreements on key issues, including DHS funding.

The memo also cited Saturday's assassination attempt against the President, stating: "Restoring DHS funding has never been more urgent, as demonstrated by recent events." —*PTI*

SENATE VOTES TO CONTINUE CUBA BLOCKADE

Senate Republicans rejected a legislation from Democrats on Tuesday that would have required President Donald Trump to end the US energy blockade on Cuba unless he receives approval from Congress. The energy blockade has further worsened the humanitarian crisis in Cuba, compounded by the arrest of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro. The vote on the war powers resolution was 51-47.

FED CHAIR MAY HOLD RATES STEADY IN FINAL MEETING

WASHINGTON, 29 APRIL

The US Federal Reserve is expected to hold its key rate steady at 4.25-4.5 per cent for a third straight meeting on Wednesday. At that level, most policymakers believe the rate can still cool inflation by slowing borrowing and spending, without dragging down hiring or pushing up unemployment.

Jerome Powell will preside over the session, which may mark his final meeting as Chair. This comes as the Senate Banking Committee is scheduled to vote on the nomination of Kevin Warsh to be his successor. That vote is expected to pass along party lines before advancing to the full Senate next month.

Trump nominated Warsh, a former top Fed official, in January. Last year, Warsh echoed Trump's calls for the Fed to lower its key interest rate, leading many Democrats in Congress to question how independently he will operate.

Powell is serving a separate term as a Governor until January 2028. Chairs typically leave the board when their leadership terms end, but Powell has signalled he could remain. —*PTI*

You'd be speaking French if not for us: Charles roasts Trump

WASHINGTON/ NEW YORK, 29 APRIL

King Charles III playfully roasted US President Donald Trump during a White House state dinner on Tuesday. The British monarch suggested that, had it not been for British intervention in North America, Americans might currently be speaking French.

"You recently commented, Mr President, that if it were not for the US, European countries would be speaking German. Dare I say that if it wasn't for us, you'd be speaking French," King Charles said, eliciting loud laughter.

This was a direct response to Trump's comments at World Economic Forum in January that Europe might have lost World War II if not for the US.

Britain's King Charles III toasts with Britain's King Charles III during a State Dinner in the East Room of the White House State Dinner Tuesday —*PTI*

Trump made a faux pas, again. He said that during a private meeting earlier, Charles agreed with him that Iran should never be allowed to have nuclear weapons.

The comment triggered mild consternation among pundits in the UK. By convention, people aren't supposed to relay private conversations with the monarch. That is partly because the king has to remain above the political fray, but also because he cannot correct the record if he's misquoted. —*PTI*

CHARLES BATS FOR UKRAINE

"In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, when NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time and the UNSC was united in the face of terror, we answered the call together, as our people have done so for more than a century.... Today, that same unyielding resolve is needed for the defence of Ukraine and her most courageous people.

—Britain's King Charles III

Trump to feature on limited edition passports

The State Department is all set to unveil a limited-edition US passport with pictures of President Donald Trump and the Founding Fathers to commemorate the 250th anniversary of American independence in July.

The special passports will be available only to those who show up in person at the Washington Passport Agency.

The passports, which are set to be released this summer, are part of the Trump administration's broader "America250" celebration, which also includes a Grand Prix race and a UFC fight. —*PTI*

Mali flays 'foreign backed coup' in Russia meet

BAMAKO, 29 APRIL

"Russian contingents in African countries have recently increased by an additional 8,000 personnel, and Russia is attempting to introduce the use of drones in each country of deployment through supply, local production, and training. According to our (Foreign Intelligence Service), the expansion of such military activity by Russia could inevitably lead to the modernisation and strengthening of terrorist organisations

—Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainain President

Mali's junta leader Assimi Goita met Russia's ambassador to Bamako on Tuesday, authorities said. This is Goita's first public appearance since the West African nation saw a massive attack by Islamic militants and separatists over the weekend.

"Military operations will continue until the armed groups involved have been completely neutralised and security has been sustainably restored throughout the country," Goita said in his first public comments after the meeting Russian Ambassador Igor Gromyko.

In power since a 2020 coup, the junta suffered a major attack on Saturday after al-Qaida-linked militants and the separatist Azawad Liberation Front group staged coordinated attacks on at least four cities in a region considered a global hot spot for terror-related deaths. The fighters eventually seized the city of Kidal and killed Mali's Defence Minister Gen Sadio Camara.

Goita said the attackers were backed by foreign powers.

"These attacks are not isolated incidents; they are part of a broader destabilisation campaign devised and carried out by armed terrorist groups and their internal and external sponsors, who provide them with intelligence and logistical support," Goita added.

Russia's Ministry of Defence denounced the weekend attacks as a coup attempt and claimed it was foiled by Russian forces — the Africa Corps— in partnership with Malian security forces.

A ministry statement said around 12,000 attackers carried out the offensive using sophisticated weapons. —*PTI*

RSF head Hemedti owns £17.7M worth of properties in UAE

DUBAI, 29 APRIL

Mohamed 'Hemedti' Hamdan Dagalo, the leader of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF), amassed a vast property portfolio in Dubai as part of a sprawling "paramilitary-industrial complex" across Africa and West Asia, an investigation has revealed.

Hemedti, who has been accused of genocide in Sudan and sanctioned by the US, and his family members and other individuals involved in the Sudanese war, have acquired more than 20 luxury properties, worth £17.7m, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to US investigative group the Sentry.

The UAE has strong ties to the RSF, which has put it at odds with allies Saudi Arabia and the US. Hemedti and the RSF are accused of smuggling gold mined from Sudan to the UAE. Nick Donovan, a senior researcher at eh Sentry, told the Guardian that the Dagalo family had found a safe haven for its wealth in Dubai.

The RSF sprung out of the Janjaweed, a Sudan paramilitary group, that also fought in the Yemen civil war in 2015, reportedly with Saudi and UAE-aligned forces against the Iran-backed Houthis and other factions, with the country now facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Sudan is considered the world's largest humanitarian crisis by the UN, after a civil war broke out between the RSF and the Sudan Armed Forces three years ago. —*PTI*

CULLING APPROVED FOR 80

Vantara offers to save Escobar's hippos, Colombians divided

PUERTO TRIUNFO, 29 APRIL

A proposal by India's Anant Ambani to relocate 80 "cocaine hippos" from Colombia to his private wildlife sanctuary has intensified debate over how to manage the invasive species descended from animals once owned by drug lord Pablo Escobar.

The hippos were brought in the 1980s for Escobar's Hacienda Nápoles estate. After his death, the animals escaped into surrounding waterways and have multiplied to 200. The Colombian authorities warn the population could exceed 500 within a few years.

Colombia's Environment Ministry authorised the culling of 80 hippos.

Anant has offered to relocate the hippos to Vantara, a 3,500-acre private rescue centre in Jamnagar, Gujarat, which claims to house 1,50,000 animals. Ambani urged Colombian authorities to reconsider euthanasia, stating the animals "did not choose where to be born" and deserve a humane solution.

However, Vantara faced scrutiny in India and abroad, though it was later given a clean chit from the Supreme Court. A petition before the court had alleged unlawful animal acquisition, trafficking, mismanagement, and financial irregularities, including claims of improper permits, forged documentation, and the transport of exotic species and elephants.

Meanwhile, fishermen along the Magdalena River report frequent and dangerous encounters with the hippos, which can charge boats and overturn vessels. "These hippos are a true nightmare," said one fisherman.

At the same time, tourism linked to hippo sightings has become an important source of income in towns such as Puerto Triunfo, where some residents oppose culling and fear economic collapse if the animals disappear. —*AGENCIES*

Hippos at a lagoon at Hacienda Napoles Park, once the private estate of the late drug kingpin Pablo Escobar, in Puerto Triunfo, Colombia —*PTI*

Rupee falls to all-time low of 94.82 against USD

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

The rupee depreciated 20 paise to close at its all-time low of 94.88 against the US dollar on Wednesday, pressured by rising Brent crude oil prices, hovering around USD 115 per barrel, and continued foreign capital outflows. Forex traders said the elevated crude oil price is likely to sharply impact India's import costs. At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.79 against the US dollar, then lost ground and declined to 94.88 against the US dollar during the session. On 28 April the rupee depreciated by 53 paise to close at 94.68 against the US dollar. The dollar index was up 0.08 per cent at 98.72. —*PTI*

Tyre sector seeks duty relief on raw materials

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

The Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said on Wednesday that it has asked the government for policy support to help mitigate supply chain uncertainties arising from the ongoing West Asia crisis. Specifically, the association is seeking customs duty relief on critical raw materials. "ATMA appreciated the temporary customs duty exemption on select raw materials such as synthetic rubber and certain resins until 30 June," it said.

The government's action was a timely and supportive step for the industry, ATMA added. However, other key inputs polyester and nylon tyre cord, bead wire, steel tyre cord, carbon black, processing oils and petrochemical-based chemicals — continue to attract significant import duties despite ongoing price volatility and supply constraints, it said.—*PTI*

-PTI

Tata Motors files 144 patents in FY26

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Commercial vehicle major, Tata Motors Ltd (TML), said on Wednesday that it had filed 144 patent applications in the financial year 2026, marking its highest number of patent filings in a single year. These filings are closely aligned with the company's strategic priorities, including enhanced vehicle safety, improved reliability, optimised total cost of ownership, and superior occupant comfort, the company added. During the year, the company strengthened its intellectual property portfolio by filing 21 design applications and 35 copyright applications, in addition to its patent filings, TML said in a statement. TML said it also secured 15 patent grants, increasing the cumulative number of granted patents to over 650. —*PTI*

Piccadily Q4 profit rises 13.6% to Rs 45.2 crore

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Piccadily Agro Industries Ltd, maker of Indri single malt whisky and Camikara Rum, reported a 13.6 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in net profit to Rs 45.22 crore for the March quarter of FY26. While also posting a net profit of Rs 39.80 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago, according to a regulatory filing. Its sales rose 31.8 per cent to Rs 353.69 crore in the December quarter of FY26, compared to Rs 268.23 crore from the same period of the previous fiscal. Chief financial officer, Natwar Aggarwal, said Piccadily Agro crossed Rs 1,100 crore revenue mark in FY26 driven by strong global and domestic demand for our premium spirits. —*PTI*

Crude falls 1% to Rs 9,417 per barrel as UAE exit OPEC

Globally, Brent crude fell 0.34% to $104.04 per barrel

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Crude oil prices fell nearly 1 per cent to Rs 9,417 per barrel in futures trade on Wednesday, tracking losses in global benchmarks after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced its exit from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) producer group.

Analysts said persistent uncertainty over the US-Iran conflict and continued disruption in the Strait of Hormuz capped losses in oil prices.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for May delivery fell Rs 68, or 0.72 per cent, to Rs 9,417 per barrel.

Traders attributed the decline to weak global trends following the UAE's announcement that it will leave the OPEC and its wider OPEC+ alliance effective on 1 May

The UAE had been a long-time member of OPEC, first through Abu Dhabi in 1967 and later after the country was formed in 1971.

In the international markets, Brent crude for the June contract decreased 0.34 per cent to USD 104.04 per barrel, and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) fell 0.68 per cent to USD 99.25 per barrel in New York.

Analysts at Dutch banking and financial services corporation, ING THINK said the departure of the UAE from the oil cartel is expected to have a limited immediate impact. However, it may raise supply prospects over the medium-to-longer term.

"Had this been announced any other time, we would likely have seen more downward pressure on oil prices," they said.

They added that near-term price direction will continue to be driven by developments in the Persian Gulf and the timing of a resumption in oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

With no signs of an imminent resumption in oil flows, ING revised its oil price forecasts for the rest of the year. "We now expect Brent Crude to average USD 104 per barrel in the second quarter and USD 92 a barrel in the fourth quarter," it added. —*PTI*

UAE has been a long-standing member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries –FREEPIK

Firms sell petrol Rs 14/litre, diesel at Rs 18/litre losses

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Oil marketing companies are selling petrol and diesel at a loss of Rs 14 per litre and Rs 18 per litre, respectively, as elevated crude prices outpace capped retail fuel rates, squeezing marketing margins.

The elevated energy prices post West Asia crisis are likely to leave companies with an under recovery of Rs 80,000 crore on cooking gas LPG in the current fiscal, while fertiliser subsidy is projected to rise to Rs 2.05 to 2.25 lakh crore.

Rating agency Icra said supply disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have tightened availability of fuels, fertilisers and chemicals, pushing up prices and increasing cost pressures across downstream industries.

Crude prices before the West Asia crisis were around USD 70-72 a barrel.

Elevated raw material and energy costs are expected to weigh on profitability across oil marketing, fertilisers, chemicals and city gas distribution sectors, with limited ability to fully pass on higher costs to end consumers.

Icra expects the pressure on margins and credit profiles to persist in the near term. Chemical and polymer prices have surged, prompting stockpiling by manufacturers—*PTI*

54% COIN & BAR PURCHASE

India's Q1 gold demand rises 10% to 151 tonnes: WGC

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

India's gold demand witnessed a 10 per cent on-year rise to 151 tonnes during the January-March quarter of this year, driven by a sharp surge in investment demand amid a significant jump in its prices, the World Gold Council (WGC) said on Wednesday.

According to a WGC report, there has been a more pronounced structural shift in the country's gold demand, with investment-led buying rising by 54 per cent across bars and coins and ETFs to 82 tonnes.

Jewellery demand declined 19 per cent year-on-year to 66 tonnes, as elevated prices and affordability constraints continued to weigh on consumption. For the full year, demand for gold could stand between 650-750 tonnes, compared to 712 tonnes last year.

The country's total gold demand during the first quarter of 2025 stood at 137 tonnes.

In value terms, demand surged 99 per cent year-on-year in the March quarter of 2026 to a record Rs 2,27,500 crore (USD 25 billion), the report added.

Domestic gold price (MCX spot gold price) rose 81 per cent year-over-year during the first quarter of 2026, reaching a record quarterly average of Rs 1,51,108 per 10 grams.

Bar and coin demand rose 34 per cent year-on-year to 62 tonnes, up by 20 per cent compared to 26.0 tonnes in the same quarter of 2025. Value demand surged 142 per cent to Rs 94,100 crore.

India accounted for 13 per cent of global bar and coin demand, with y-o-y growth outpacing most major markets, barring China, the report added.

Total gold recycled in India was 31.2 tonnes, while the total gold imports in India stood at 186 tonnes. —*PTI*

Gold declines to Rs 1.5 lakh/10g

Prices of gold of 99.9 per cent purity declined by Rs 1,500 to Rs 1.52 lakh per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) in New Delhi on Wednesday due to profit booking as rising crude oil rates raise concerns over inflation ahead of the US Federal Reserve's decision. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 1,54,300 per 10 grams in the previous session. In the international market, spot gold fell USD 23.31, or 0.51 per cent, to USD 4,573.75 per ounce. —*PTI*

NIFTY CLIMBS 181 PTS

Sensex rises 610 pts on buying of FMCG, auto shares

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

Benchmark Sensex rebounded nearly 610 points and broader Nifty settled above 24,100 on Wednesday following value buying in fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), auto and telecom shares amid earnings optimism and a rally in Asian markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 609.45 points, or 0.79 per cent, to settle at 77,496.36. During the day, it surged 1,095.6 points, or 1.42 per cent, to a high of 77,9825. 1.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 181.95 points or 0.76 per cent to end at 24,177.65.

Among Sensex firms, ITC, Tech Mahindra, Maruti, Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the biggest gainers. However, InterGlobe Aviation, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv and ICICI Bank lost.

Maruti climbed 2.82 per cent after it reported a record annual net profit of Rs 14,679.5 crore in FY26.

"Strong results from key companies reinforced confidence in underlying domestic demand and balance sheet resilience," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Broader markets also rallied as the BSE SmallCap Select index climbed 0.75 per cent, while MidCap Select index declined 0.49 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, FMCG jumped by 1.57 per cent, followed by realty (1.42 per cent), telecommunication (1.28 per cent), energy (1.14 per cent), auto (1.02 per cent), MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (0.83 per cent) and IT (0.81 per cent). Utilities dropped 1.22 per cent, power (1.05 per cent) and consumer durables (0.43 per cent). —*PTI*

'Renewable energy met 1/3 of power demand'

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Wednesday said that nearly one-third of the record peak demand of over 256 GW earlier this month was met through renewable energy like solar, wind and hydro.

The peak power demand touched a record high of 256.11 GW on 25 April.

Speaking at the Resilient Futures Summit organised by Economist Enterprise, Joshi said thatIndia is capable of handling peak power demand through renewable energy. India is investing in grid modernisation, digitisation, and also using AI and digital twins.

The Minister also said that the government is making efforts to translate installed capacity into actual generation, and consequently transmission to boost the share of renewable energy in the power basket.

The peak power requirement was met through diverse generation sources, including thermal, hydro, nuclear, and renewable energy, ensuring reliability and grid stability.

According to the Power Ministry, solar contributed 21.5 per cent of power generation to meet the peak of 256.1 GW on April 25.

The hydro power contribution was 4.4 per cent, and wind energy added 1.9 per cent.

Nuclear power and gas contributed 2.4 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively. —*PTI*

ENERGY SECURITY A MUST FOR INDIA'S RESILIENCE: SAGAR

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Sagar Adani, executive director of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL), on Wednesday called for building robust domestic infrastructure to ensure energy security in a bid to withstand global shocks and disruptions.

Addressing a session at Resilient Futures Summit organised by Economist Enterprise, the industrialist noted that countries should shift their priorities from how fast they can grow to how well they can withstand disruptions.

He said water security needs energy for desalination, treatment, and distribution, while food security needs energy for fertilisers, irrigation, and logistics.

For digital leadership, energy is needed for data centers, AI, and computing infrastructure. Availability of energy ensures that growth remains affordable for citizens.

"If India is to become a developed economy by 2047……adding nearly 2,000 gigawatts of new capacity over the next two decades," he said.

Most developed nations are either energy independent or have built deep, strategic energy partnerships, he said.

India will benefit from a multi-pronged approach, as it will allow it to pursue decarbonization while maintaining energy security, he said.—*PTI*

Non-standard oil packs deceive consumers: Soya processors

INDORE, 29 APRIL

Indore-based Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA) has called on the Centre to intervene over the use of non-standard pack sizes in edible oil packaging to prevent misleading consumers by confusing them on price and quantity.

SOPA executive director DN Pathak said that the organisation has written a letter to the Secretary of the Union Consumer Affairs Department in this regard. The regulatory framework should ensure that there is no scope for "abuse," he said.

The letter said that five national edible oil industry organisations had made a representation on the subject, recommending standardisation of packaging volume.

In absence of standardisation, compliant firms have to sell products in non-standard pack sizes to remain competitive, the SOPA said. —*PTI*

GDP TO SLIP TO 6% ON $ 120 PER BARREL CRUDE: EY INDIA

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

India's GDP growth may slip to around 6 per cent and retail inflation could rise to the Reserve Bank of India's upper tolerance band of 6 per cent in FY27, if the Indian crude basket (ICB) price averages USD 120 a barrel, EY India said on Wednesday.

EY India chief policy advisor DK Srivastava said policymakers need to consider upward revision in the repo rate and accelerated diversification of sources of crude supply

The US Energy Information Administration EIA Short-Term Energy Outlook projects Brent crude oil prices to increase from USD 81 per barrel to USD 115 per barrel—*PTI*

Dr Reddy's gets nod for Diabetes injection

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Wednesday said it has received a notice of compliance (NOC) from Health Canada for its generic semaglutide injection indicated for the management of type-2 diabetes.

Dr Reddy's becomes the first company to receive the market authorisation for generic Semaglutide Injection in Canada.

The market authorisation covers the 2 mg/pen (1.34 mg/ml) and 4 mg/pen (1.34 mg / m).

With the launch preparations underway, Dr Reddy's said it is "well-positioned to bring this important treatment option available to Canadian patients"

This approval fortifies the company's long-standing presence in Canada. —*PTI*

FOR HUMANITY'S BENEFIT

AI may kill us: Musk at Open AI trial

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Elon Musk, during his OpenAI trial testimony this week, warned that AI could become biggest threat if left unchecked, suggesting that the world must avoid a 'terminator' future and build AI tools for humanity's welfare.

While testifying in his legal battle against OpenAI, the Tesla and SpaceX chief said the world should be careful about where AI leads.

"We want to be in a Gene Roddenberry outcome, like Star Trek. Not so much a James Cameron movie like Terminator," Musk said.

Musk sued OpenAI, the company he helped co-found in 2015, for drifting from its original non-profit mission of building AI for the benefit of humanity and instead shifted toward commercial success. OpenAI has rejected those claims.

Elon Musk said AI can become the biggest threat if left unchecked–FREEPIK

Musk argued that someone needed to provide balance and oversight as leading companies pushed forward with AI development. He said repeated that AI may soon outperform humans in many areas, which may also hamper the job sector.

Musk also spoke about Neuralink, the brain-chip company he founded, saying one of its goals is AI safety. If humans can connect more directly with intelligent machines, he suggested, it may create a better balance between people and AI.

Musk's lawyer has tried to frame the lawsuit as a matter of principle rather than business rivalry.

OpenAI's lawyers said Musk only objected after OpenAI became successful with ChatGPT and he was upset it succeeded without him. —*PTI*

Govt waives IP registration fees for sports sector for 3 yrs

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has announced that all intellectual property registration fees, covering trademarks, copyrights, patents, designs, traditional knowledge, and geographical indication products will be waived for the sports sector for three years, effective immediately.

The Commerce Ministry will issue a formal notification to this effect.

Goyal made the announcement at the World Intellectual Property Day celebrations here on 28 April.

Goyal also announced a support scheme under which individuals with new ideas will be guided through the IP registration process. He urged students, artisans, and young innovators to act quickly.

Highlighting the massive valuations of global sporting franchises, he said that each English Premier League football club is worth anywhere between USD 8-12 billion. The IPL is valued at USD 1.5 billion. However, Goyal said that within five to seven years, IPL would be competing with the English Premier League in terms of value. He called for the creation of sports goods manufacturing clusters to promote domestic goods. —*ANI*

Trust with players is key for success as coach: Sarfaraz

KARACHI, 29 APRIL

Mutual trust and clear communication with players are key to becoming a successful coach, Pakistan's new Test-format head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed said on Wednesday.

The first assignment for the 2017 Champions Trophy-winning captain will be a two-Test series in Bangladesh from May 8, which will be Pakistan's second outing in the ongoing ICC World Test Championship cycle.

The technical aspects come later. What is important is that a coach has such a relationship with his players that they understand what he wants and at the same time they are comfortable and trust him enough to sit down with him and discuss anything..—*PTI*

Veteran Indian golfer Vijay Kumar passes away

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Veteran Indian golfer Vijay Kumar has died in his hometown, Lucknow, due to a heart attack on Wednesday. He was 57.

The winner of the 2002 Indian Open and a four-time Order of Merit champion, Vijay was among the most accomplished and respected names in Indian professional golf.

Vijay turned professional in 1988. He dominated Indian domestic golf from the mid-1990s to the early part of the next decade with an illustrious career marked by numerous titles. Vijay's iconic triumph at the 2002 Indian Open remains a landmark moment in Indian golf.

He is one of only nine Indian golfers to have won the Indian Open.—*PTI*

PTI

Millie Bright retires from soccer because of injuries

LONDON, 29 APRIL

Former England defender Millie Bright announced her retirement from soccer with immediate effect at the age of 32 on Wednesday after "playing injured for the last six years." "I'm tired. I'm just a human," Bright said in an emotional video posted by Chelsea, her club since 2014. Bright, who hasn't played for Chelsea since February because of an ankle problem, withdrew herself from selection for last year's European Championship won by England for mental and physical health reasons. She played 88 times for England, having a key role in the national team's title-winning campaign at Euro 2022, and won eight league titles with Chelsea.—*PTI*

Afghan women's refugee team allowed to play

WASHINGTON, 29 APRIL

An Afghan women's refugee team has been granted eligibility for international competitions, some five years after national team players fled their country's Taliban rule.

The FIFA Council, meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, agreed on Tuesday to amend its regulations to recognize the refugee team, which plays under the name Afghan Women United.

While it is too late for the refugee team to try to qualify for the 2027 Women's World Cup in Brazil, it could participate in qualification for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"We are proud of the beautiful journey initiated by Afghan Women United, and with this initiative, we aim to enable them, as well as other FIFA member associations.—*PTI*

Gujarat face rampant Bengaluru at home

RCB have been in imperious form, registering six victories in eight matches

AHMEDABAD, 29 APRIL

Searching for some much-needed consistency, the Gujarat Titans face a stern test against a red-hot Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their Indian Premier League match here on Thursday.

At the halfway stage of the tournament, the Gujarat Titans find themselves stuck in mid-table with four wins and as many losses from eight games. In contrast, defending champions RCB have been in imperious form, registering six victories in eight matches. RCB's new ball duo of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood has wreaked havoc in tandem. While Bhuvneshwar has turned back the clock with his swing masterclass, Hazlewood has troubled the batters with Test match lengths, targeting the outside edge.

Add to that the challenge of facing Krundal Pandya and his barrage of variations in the middle overs.

GT have been labelled as top-heavy with Sai Sudharsan, captain Shubman Gill and Jos Buttler again scoring the bulk of the runs. Washington Sundar has proved himself in the middle order, while finishers like Shahrukh Khan and Rahul Tewatia have not set the stage on fire yet.

Jason Holder has been accommodated in the middle-order to lend more potency. Both sides met only a week ago at the Chinnaswamy with RCB comfortably chasing down 206 with seven balls to spare. GT have also not been able to dominate at home, having lost two of their three games at Motera.

RCB are favourites to win the game, but there is always room for improvement. Jacob Bethell, who played the last two games due to injury to fellow Englishman Phil Salt, was not able to make an impact. The highly rated star would be itching to make a statement on Thursday night while batting alongside Virat Kohli. —*PTI*

PTI

GT VS RCB @ Ahmedabad Match starts at 7.30 pm IST

Riyan could face disciplinary action over vaping incident

Rajasthan Royals captain Riyan Parag could face disciplinary action from India's cricket board after he was seen vaping in the dressing room during his team's win over Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League (IPL). Images of Parag, 24, using an e cigarette during Tuesday's match in Chandigarh were broadcast live on television and quickly went viral on social media. E cigarettes are banned in India under a 2019 law that prohibits their manufacture, import, sale, and storage, regardless of nicotine content. Violations can attract fines of up to Rs. 500,000 and jail terms. Personal possession and vaping in public is also banned. Parag scored 29 runs as Rajasthan handed table topper Punjab its first defeat of the season, successfully chasing down 222. The captain has struggled with the bat this season, scoring just 117 runs in nine matches at an average of 14.62.

No doom and gloom after first defeat: PBKS coach Hopes

Punjab Kings fast bowling coach James Hopes said his side's first defeat of the season is a timely "reality check", but insisted there is no sense of panic within the camp. Table-toppers Punjab Kings, the only unbeaten side heading into the clash, suffered a six-wicket loss to Rajasthan Royals on Tuesday night. "It's a reality check. Yeah, we're flying. We've been winning games, and it's great, and everyone's happy, and it's still a great environment," Hope said at the post-match press conference. "It's game eight, and we've just lost our first game of the IPL, so I'm not going to sit here and say it's doom and gloom in the change room," he added. The Kings have enough time to regroup as they next fly to Ahmedabad to take on the Gujarat Titans on Sunday. Hopes said the focus would be on addressing minor shortcomings. "One loss, you're not going to go through the IPL and not lose a game.

Indian lifters grab 3 medals at Commonwealth Y and J Championships

NEW DELHI, 29 APRIL

Indian lifter continued their impressive run at the Commonwealth Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships and Universal Cup, fetching a gold and three silver medals on the third day of the competition in Apia, Samoa, on Wednesday.

Bellana Harika fetched the lone gold of the day in the 69kg weight class at the Commonwealth Youth and Junior Championships with a total effort of 197kg (86kg+111kg).

Karangi Tharangini 179kg (79kg+100kg) and Bhumika Mohite 195kg (109kg+86kg) won the silver medals in the 63kg events.

In the Universal Cup, Abhishek Nipane clinched the 88kg silver with a total effort of 324kg (140kg+184kg).

Indian lifter had grabbed four golds on the second day of the competitions. —*PTI*

THOMAS CUP FINALS

Ayush Shetty and Prannoy win, but India lose 2-3 to China

HORSENS, 29 APRIL

India went down 2-3 to China in their final Group A tie of the Thomas Cup Finals, despite fighting comeback wins from Ayush Shetty and HS Prannoy here on Wednesday.

The 2022 champions, India, who have already sealed their quarterfinal spot, were on the back foot after Lakshya Sen and the doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty lost close encounters to concede a 0-2 lead. Under pressure, Ayush delivered, recovering from a game down to beat Weng Hong Yang 17-21, 21-13, 21-15 in the second singles and reduce the margin. It came down to the second doubles match, but the pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun couldn't get across He Ji Ting and Ren Xiang Yu, losing 17-21, 13-21 as China took an unassailable 3-1 lead.

Prannoy then rallied from a game down to beat Lu Guang Zu 20-22, 21-19, 21-11 in the third singles to reduce the margin of the defeat.

Lakshya, a 2021 world championships bronze medallist, had beaten world No. 7 Li Shi Feng en route to a runner-up finish at the All England Championships last month, but he could not replicate that form in the decider, going down 19-21, 21-8, 12-21 in the first singles. World No. 4 pair of Satwik and Chirag also put up a gallant fight, saving five match points before losing 13-21, 21-13, 24-26 to Paris Olympics silver medallists Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang. Following the loss, India finished second in Group A and is likely to face 2014 winners Japan in the quarterfinals. Japan topped Group B. —*PTI*

WE'RE COMFORTABLE IN ALL CONDITIONS: RCB'S FLOWER

AHMEDABAD, 29 APRIL

Royal Challengers Bengaluru head coach Andy Flower rated a varied bowling attack, which is adept in "exploiting different surfaces" as his side's biggest asset in the ongoing edition of the IPL.

After dismantling Delhi Capitals in the previous match at New Delhi, the defending champions are now set to face Gujarat Titans at the sprawling Narendra Modi Stadium here on Thursday.

"We've been very good at taking power play wickets and putting opposition under pressure. We're comfortable with whatever conditions are put in front of us. We believe we have an attack that can exploit different surfaces," said Flower in the pre-match press meet here on Wednesday.

Flower might have had the outstanding opening burst by Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood against the DC, where the pacers combined to reduce the home side to eight for six inside the power play segment. "We've got a good mix, experienced swing bowlers, a world-class fast bowler in Hazlewood, and spinners who bring different skill sets. —*PTI*

RAIN WASHES OUT 2ND T20I BETWEEN NZ VS BANGLADESH

CHATTOGRAM, 29 APRIL

The second T20 between Bangladesh and New Zealand was washed out due to persistent rain on Wednesday.

The match was called off without a ball being bowled as the rain showed no sign of stopping.

Bangladesh leads the three-match series 1-0 following a six-wicket win in the first game.

The series final is on Saturday in Mirpur.

Bangladesh earlier claimed the preceding three-match ODI series 2-1. —*PTI*

POTAPOVA TURNS 2ND CHANCE INTO HISTORY WITH RECORD MADRID OPEN S/F RUN

MADRID, 29 APRIL

Anastasia Potapova turned tennis heartbreak into history by becoming the first lucky loser to reach a WTA 1000 semifinal after her 6-1, 6-7(4), 6-3 win over Karolina Pliskova at the Madrid Open on Wednesday.

The Russian-born Austrian, who lost in qualifying last week, has made the most of her unexpected entry into the main draw, beating the former World No. 1 in a roller-coaster contest despite squandering three match points. Potapova's run has included impressive wins over former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko and World No. 2 Elena Rybakina.

Asked if she thought she would be in the last four after her qualifying loss, the unseeded Potapova said, "No, I wouldn't, for any money and anything. "That's what makes our sport beautiful. I was given a second chance, and now I'm here.

"I'm super happy. There's nothing better that could happen to me in my life at the moment." —*PTI*

Anastasia Potapova will face Marta Kostyuk or Linda Noskova in the semi-finals X/@MADRIDOPEN

Arjun and Siddhant were declared eligible to play in the T20 ML

MUMBAI, 29 APRIL

Arjun Tendulkar and wicket-keeper-batter Siddhant Addhatrao have been declared eligible to be part of the T20 Mumbai League auction ahead of the tournament's fourth edition, after representing different state associations last season.

While Tendulkar has played for Goa for the past few seasons after moving from Mumbai, Addhatrao is said to have obtained a No-Objection Certificate from Puducherry after representing them last season.

According to sources, both Tendulkar and Addhatrao were cleared by the BCCI to participate in the T20 Mumbai League, as neither has played in any state league over the past 12 months.

The auction for both the men's and women's competitions will be held on May 2, with the tournament set to take place in the first half of June.

"To maintain focus and prevent excessive exertion, each player is permitted to participate in only one officially recognised cricket league, excluding the Indian Premier League (IPL), during twelve months commencing from the conclusion of the tournament in which they last participated," as per the BCCI guidelines for state associations hosting T20 tournaments. "For instance, if a player has participated in a Twenty20 tournament organised by a State Association, which concluded on August 31, 2024, they will not be permitted to participate in any other Twenty20 tournament organised by any other State Association until 1 September 2025," it adds. In the case of Tendulkar and Addhatrao, the players have not taken part in any T20 league organised by any state association in the last 12 months. —*PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL 1ST LEG

Goals galore as PSG beats Munich 5-4

PARIS, 29 APRIL

Titleholder Paris Saint-Germain trailed early, led by three goals and ultimately held on for a pulsating 5-4 win over Bayern Munich in the highest-scoring semifinal match in Champions League history.And there's still next week's second leg to come.

PSG built a 5-2 lead early in the second half thanks to two goals each from flying winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembélé at Parc des Princes.

"We deserved to win, we deserved to lose, we deserved to draw," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. "It was an exceptional match. I have never experienced a match of such intensity as a coach. I have never seen a rhythm like that, it was incredible, you have to congratulate all the players."

Down by three goals, Bayern fought back brilliantly. Defender Dayot Upamecano's header midway through the second half from Joshua Kimmich's free kick gave Bayern hope, and Luis Díaz's stinging strike made it a one-goal deficit heading into next Wednesday's return leg in Munich. "I think something special can happen at home, there will be 75,000 people, it will be a hell of an atmosphere," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said. "The Allianz Arena is a mythical area where Bayern has enjoyed much success."

Rather than scale back and defend more, Kompany said he was ready to take even more risks. —*PTI*

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia scored two of a stunning nine goals in the first leg of the semifinal between PSG and Bayern -X/@PSG

FIFA enacts new World Cup rule on yellow cards

WASHINGTON, 29 APRIL

FIFA has tweaked World Cup rules on yellow cards to ensure fewer players are suspended for key elimination games. An extra amnesty for yellow cards wiping player disciplinary records twice during the expanded tournament in North America was proposed at a meeting on Tuesday of FIFA's ruling council. Later, FIFA issued a statement confirming the change.

"Reflective of the expanded format with an extra knockout round, the FIFA Council confirmed an amendment to the regulations for the FIFA World Cup 2026 whereby single yellow cards in the final competition will be canceled after the group stage and then again after the quarterfinals," it said.At the World Cup, players must serve a one-game ban if they are shown a yellow card in two different games, but single yellow cards were canceled at previous tournaments after the quarterfinals stage. That ensured no player would miss the final through suspension just because of getting a yellow card in the semi-final. The expanded 48-team World Cup format, with an extra round-of-32 knockout stage, led to a FIFA review aimed at helping keep players on the field. —*PTI*